

Severn River Association Minutes

Board of Directors Meeting Wednesday, September 25, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 2:09p.m. by President Lee Meadows, with a quorum (majority of Directors) present. Directors present were Don Carren, Lisa Bender, Bob Whitcomb, Kurt Riegel, Tom Guay, Ken Hatch, Steve Barry, Sally Hornor, Charlotte Lubbert, Maureen Burt, Miriam Mellin and Mike Robinson. No Directors were absent. Others present were John Wright, Lynne Rockenbauch (Treasurer), and Bob vom Saal (Secretary).

Minutes of the June 27 Board Meeting: were not approved - approval was postponed because several Directors had not yet reviewed them. Secretary will email them later for approval.

Treasurer's Report – Treasurer Lynne Rockenbauch reported balances of \$25,155 in checking and \$47,347 in savings, total \$72,552, down 2.6% from last year. She also provided detailed comparisons of balances with last year, and detailed comparisons of income and expenses with last year and with the budget.

Election of Vice President: John Wright was unanimously elected to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of Dick Spencer

Current Activities update:

- 1. State Highway Administration Blowout – Mike Robinson/Steve Barry:** Charlotte is applying the political pressure to get this major storm water problem corrected. She talked to Claudia Donegan and will meet with her 11/5 or 11/12. She wrote to Cathy Vitale, Ed Raleigh & Mike Busch describing the problem and asking their help. She met with Ginger Ellis – they hiked the area and showed Ginger the damage. Ginger Ellis will send a summary to Chris Phipps and set up a meeting with SHA and DNR on 10/5. That meeting will be combined with the meeting with Claudia Donegan. They agreed this was the major source of sediment in the Severn. Steve Barry noted that feet on the ground and eyes on the River are more effective than photos and reports. The State owns most of the property and thus should take the lead on correcting the problem. Nobody has yet raised the issue with them. The Jabez side is the only coastal stream from Maine to Florida having a native trout population. Charlotte will represent the SRA committee at the meeting. Claudia said there is money available. SHA engineers did report this problem in 2007 and SHA was planning to do a project in 2014. Ginger Ellis said that AACo was unaware of the problem and did not have it in their priorities. The big bowl by the intersection of Rte 3 and I-97 used to be a creek before the construction of I-97. Miriam asked what do we hope to change? Mike answered that the project must reduce the flow into the area. The SHA report identifies this problem. The channel can be used for a catch basin to reduce peak flows. Our real objective is to change the SHA's approach completely – they now rely on pipes and this must change to rely on catch basins and infiltration. Lee noted this will cost tens of Millions of dollars, Mike Busch has raised the priority on this, but it will still probably take 3-4 years. Too much cooperation between agencies can lead to finger-pointing so it is better to get one agency to take the lead if possible. SHA claims that most of the water belongs to AACo. We need pressure on the SHA, not money or volunteers. We hope that DNR will fund the cure – they have money in their 2015 budget. Steve noted that the SHA also has TMDLs, which may be used to increase the political pressure. Steve also said there are about 1100 similar sites in AACo. Our involvement is to help set priorities. Charlotte filed the original complaint 2 years ago. Chris Phipps liked that. Charlotte also provided a reference for the recent survey which showed much more damage. Mike presented this problem to the Severn River Commission. The Severn RiverKeeper is also on board. The meeting will not be open to the public..
- 2. Plum Creek Phragmites Removal – Mike Robinson:** The next phase of this project is tentatively scheduled for 10/18, 9-12 AM – Mike will confirm this date and mail out notices. No Mids this year. This activity is suitable for kids – herbicides will be applied later.
- 3. Oyster Program – Bob Whitcomb:** Annapolis Yacht Club is now participating. 1000,000 new spat were planted in cages at docks. We got a good writeup in a magazine. 40%-50% survival rate in cages, 85%-90% on reef. Don Carren is assisting with distribution and meetings. Charlotte is also helping. We now grow oysters from Herald harbor to the AYC and Whitehall Bay, and are the largest operation in the Bay. Bob needs more administrative help. 40% of docks in the growing area participate.
- 4. Fund Raising by Direct Mail – Lee Meadows:** 3,000 pieces were sent in 3 batches to 3 target groups: 939 Dock owners, 1660 Boat owners and 346 owners of large (>10 acres) land tracts. Best response was dock owners – 4% response (much better than average) generated \$1245 net new income and 41 volunteers including 36 oyster growers. Other groups only had about 0.5% response and both were net losses. This is not a good funding source, though membership renewals will continue to generate revenue.

5. **Education Meetings – John Wright:** The last meeting was well attended and well received. The next is on fracking, and will be at DNR. A speaker from the Maryland Petroleum Institute will provide balance. Steve Barry suggested getting a DNR representative to also speak. The November meeting will feature Ginger Ellis speaking on AACo priorities for restoration efforts on the Severn. The December meeting will feature a CBF representative speaking about the silt behind Conowingo Dam. Delegate Steve Shuh is hosting meeting of a conservative environmental group tomorrow night in Glen Burnie. The Wildings have property in PA near a fracking site and are following this debate closely.
6. **Communications – Tom Guay:** We have a new facebook page. It must continually have activity. He started with a negative attitude toward this project, but is now starting to appreciate its potential. Steve Gunn (Editor of The Capital) “liked” our page. It features Hikes, oysters, and the Jonas Green Park project. We need more “likes”. Tom’s screen name is Zimba Fortuna. Tom asked for opinions on whether he should address the recent Letters to the Editor about the Living Shoreline in the Pines community. Severn RiverKeeper Fred Kelli is miffed that the permit was denied after objections from a Pines resident. Should we put out both sides & ask for public inputs? This project got Community funding – we should get official Pines input. Lisa favors starting a conversation. Mike agreed we should publish Fred Kelly’s letter in its entirety. Kurt Riegel said this is not a good vehicle for policy. BobW&Tom G said that’s not the point. All agreed this is a good idea for further discussion to set a policy. Lee suggested the Stormwater Utility debate may be a better discussion vehicle. Lee asked for a policy proposal from Tom G, Lee – e.g. post 2 letters (1 pro +1 con) and get comments. Tom will try to have this ready for the next Board meeting. Bob Whitcomb also started a page, for Project Clean Stream.

Board Policy Issues

7. **Community Project Accounts – Lynne Rockenbauch:** Lynne made the following motion: “I move that SRA sponsor grants that would benefit the Severn River for communities that do not have 501(c)(3) status, as follows.
 1. The community provides a brief description of the project, how it will help the river, and who the POC will be for handling checks – probably an email.
 2. If the Stormwater committee agrees that this would be beneficial to the Severn, a confirmation email (cc SRA treasurer) would be sent to the community agreeing that the Severn River Association will sponsor the project for whatever reason the committee decides. It should also name the project and restate the given community POC, provide the treasurer email (treasurer@severnriver.org) and the address to send the grant check to (PO Box 146, Annapolis), and outline the process along with what happens when the funds run out or the project is finished.
 3. The SRA treasurer would create a restricted account which would be controlled by the designated community POC into which the check would be deposited and expenses tracked.
 4. The community POC would direct the SRA treasurer to send checks for whatever amount required to whomever was doing the project until the funds were gone or the project was finished. Excess could either be kept for the next approved project from that community or returned to the grantee.”

The reason for the above motion is to define a process so we don’t get accused of money laundering. At least three communities have already taken advantage of such a process. The motion tries to codify what we have done in the past. Discussion: Charlotte has 3 donors in Herald Harbor for a project, but does not want the hassle of a formal grant application. Bob Whitcomb said one example is collecting community matching funds for grants. Kurt said we must recognize our fiduciary responsibility – the purpose of the funds must be 501©3 eligible. Steve Barry asked who writes the report for grants. This is covered by paragraph 2, and would generally be someone from the community, not the SRA, but it should be reviewed by an SRA committee. Winchester did this already – Lynne said we paid the vendor directly. Same was done for SAF grants. Motion passed.

8. **MOU Severn Riverkeeper – Bob Whitcomb:** This Memorandum Of Understanding is in lieu of a merger agreement, which has now fallen through. Fred is not ready to retire yet, or plan succession – we may revisit the merger proposal later. Bob W plans to retire from the SRA leadership next year. The Severn RiverKeeper now has no oversight – the MOU just tries to avoid conflicts. Fred wants money as part of a merger agreement. Once we agreed we want paid staff, the merger made more sense. Our ByLaws were updated partly to suit the merger. Kurt suggested we implement the MOU “on a case-by-case basis” – this was voted down. The MOU was accepted as is by majority voice vote.

Committee Management Conversion – Lee Meadows:

9. Lee proposed that over the next 18 months, each Committee should take the following **Core Development Steps:**

1. Set committee's mission and goals.
2. Determine optimum membership number & criteria.
3. Set timetable for critical new activities.
4. Implement activities

10. Current Committees:

1. Community Board Committee - Miriam Mellin Chair, Maureen Burt, Tom Guay. No report.
2. Community BMP Audits – Bob vom Saal. Chris Phipps (AACo DPW) is moving to add inspection staff, and wants our input.
3. Construction Site Audits - Lisa Bender did not accept chair – need new chair, Charlotte Lubbert will help.
4. Project Clean Stream – Bob Whitcomb Chair, Maureen, Charlotte Lubbert, Mat McGarren. No report.
5. Oysters – Bob Whitcomb Chair, Don Carren. See above report.
6. Operation Clearwater – Sally Hornor Chair, Lisa Bender. Sally is retiring from AACCC after June 2015. Her replacement has been selected – a microbiologist. This committee functions independently from the SRA – we would like to increase community participation and scope. Lisa agreed this is desirable. Lee asked the Committee to recommend how we can help. Bob W said education is our biggest contribution – communities should continue to pay for the service as they do now. Testing for Nitrates should be added – maybe we can help the Riverkeeper add this to his testing. Steve Barry noted that AACo's testing complies with EPA rules, so Sally's data is different & better because it uses more modern criteria. AACo test every 2 weeks and does not note the weather at the time of testing. Lisa Bender will chair. Kurt said we need to keep focused on human hazards. Lee said this is not actionable now, pending Committee study and recommendations.
7. Funding Committee - Lee Meadows Chair, Ken Hatch, Charlotte Lubbert, John Wright. See report above.
8. Communications Committee – Tom Guay Chair, Kurt Riegel. See report above.
9. Education & Outreach – Mike Robinson Chair, Steve Barry, Charlotte Lubbert, Lisa Bender. See report above.

11. Committees needing Board Volunteers

10. Nomination committee – Bob vom Saal agreed to chair. Need at least 1 and prefer 2 more members.
11. ii. Audit & Finance – Bob vom Saal agreed to chair. Need at least 1 more member.

Next Meetings: The next meeting was moved to January 9, 2014. The April Board Meeting Date was moved to April 10, 2014 since April 3 conflicts with a Severn River Commission meeting. Meetings will be Wednesday or Thursday afternoon at 2:00 – 4:00 pm at the Calvary United Methodist Church (off of Rowe Blvd by the DNR building). Interim electronic or physical meetings may be called as needed.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Bob vom Saal