

Executive Committee Meeting

Zoom Meeting

May 12, 2020

10:00am to 12:00pm

MEETING NOTES

ATTENDEES

Laura Blake, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Caitlin Chaffee, Rhode Island Coastal Resource Management Council (CRMC)
Richard Friesner, New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC)
Sue Kiernan, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)
Regina Lyons, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA—Region 1)
Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon
Jonathan Stone, Save The Bay
Susan Sullivan, NEIWPCC
Caitlyn Whittle, EPA—Region 1
Mike Gerel, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP)

CHAIR'S REPORT

Regina Lyons our Chair for this month called the meeting to order at 10:07am, introduced everyone on the call, and said she would work to keep us on schedule. Mike Gerel reviewed the agenda and indicated that based on the short time provided to the Executive Committee (EC) for review of the draft FY20 work plan and budget, today we will not be asking the committee to send the materials to the Steering Committee (SC) for approval. Instead, he will introduce changes since the FY19 planning materials via a short PowerPoint and a walk through the draft materials with changes highlighted in yellow. Any suggested revisions will be collected, and Mike will send out a Doodle poll to schedule a follow-up meeting in late May to review and approve revised materials.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAIR SEARCH

Caitlin Chaffee, Vice Chair, provided an update on the search for a Chair for both the EC and SC. Unfortunately, Dave Janik had turned down the offer to take on this role. She stated we had exhausted the list of candidates the group assembled on the EC call in March. David Gregg with RI Natural History Survey was suggested as a good candidate. Caitlin said she would reach out to him and report back to the group. Susan Sullivan also inquired whether it was worth going back to those that had declined previously now that we have clarified the current extent of the Chair role. Mike suggested that EC members reach out to folks directly that they feel may have renewed interest. Regina asked whether Caitlin would be interested in the position for perhaps a year, and Caitlin said she would consider it if supported by the group. Mike noted that in the absence of a Chair he will continue to alphabetically ask members to serve as a rotating Chair.

Mike suggested that the EC consider meeting quarterly (rather than six times a year) on the morning of SC meetings to reduce the “day commitment” for EC members from 10 to 4. He felt this would lighten the load on existing members and help compel more interest in the Chair role for folks that are time constrained. Both Heide Ricci and Sue Kiernan felt holding the EC meetings a month or so prior to the SC meetings was useful to inform plans for the subsequent SC meet. There was group consensus that reducing the number of meetings to four a month or so prior to future SC meetings made sense. Mike said this meant we would cancel the July 14th EC meeting on the schedule, and keep the September 8th and November 10th meetings, which fall prior to the last two SC meetings of the year. The website and Outlook invites will be updated.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Richard Friesner provided an overview of NBEP’s funds budgeted, remaining, and projected expenditures as of March 31, 2020. He noted that about 15 months of salary should remain at the beginning of the next fiscal year. Mike said that the budget we will discuss later today is designed to assure we have 12 months of salary in the bank at the close of the FY20 agreement. He also pointed out that projected travel expenditures were reduced due to COVID-19. All contractual and subaward obligations will be met. Few invoices have been received for FY19 awards so far. Richard highlighted that six (6) small capacity grants have been awarded to partners to support the Blackstone Needs Assessment Project, with contracts pending. Mike stated that NEIWPC will be processing one-year contract extensions for all nine (9) SNEP projects awarded in FY19 to accommodate COVID-19 delays. Mike said that members should expect an overview of the 11 projects SNEP is currently funding at the June 24th SC meeting.

VISION 2032 UPDATE

Mike directed everyone’s attention to the May Program Report provided for today’s meeting. He offered an update on the status of NBEP’s *Vision 2032*. The Vision 2032 Subcommittee (25-30 people have been attending) has now met five times, NBEP has developed an 18-pp draft *Vision 2032 Blueprint* (“blueprint”) that provides a road map for building the plan, and overall, engagement and progress has been excellent. Mike also stated that NBEP has had initial discussions regarding hiring a graphic designer and considering forming a small group to guide design and launch of *Vision 2032* online presence to aid with outreach and engagement. The goal is to respond to the subcommittee’s desire to engage new interests early in the *Vision 2032* process, support a meaningful listening phase of plan development, and transparently share of information about our ongoing work. For more detail, please see the meeting notes and draft blueprint here: <http://nbep.org/about/ccmp/>.

BLACKSTONE NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROJECT UPDATE

Mike offered that the third meeting of the Blackstone project was held on May 6th. The meeting offered four presentations, some initial voting on priority needs, and some excellent feedback. 38 people attended the meeting, which was a great turn out. NBEP will be creating a first draft needs assessment for the next project meeting to be held early in July. Mike also said that materials from past meetings have now been posted on the NBEP website here: <http://nbep.org/projects/blackstone-needs-assessment/>.

STEERING COMMITTEE EXPECTATIONS DOCUMENT

Mike shared the Steering Committee Expectations document with the committee. This document was first provided to the EC in December 2019 and was revised since the March meeting based on comments from Sue. He asked if the committee was ready to send this document to the SC for review and a decision whether all SC members should be required to sign. Susan suggested that the language prior to the Program Director’s signature that mentioned the Guiding Principles, EPA guidelines, and NEIWPC

handbook be removed. Jonathan Stone agreed with this revision. With that revision, the SC concurred that the document should be sent to the SC as soon as possible. Mike obligated to revise the document and share with the SC with the package for their next meeting on June 24th.

FY20 WORK PLAN & BUDGET DISCUSSION

Mike presented an overview of the FY20 NEP (Section 320 and SNEP funds) work plans and budgets. For the Section 320 work plan, he used the FY19 as a base and highlighted substantive edits in yellow, whereas a new SNEP work plan and budgets for both funding sources were provided. The most notable changes included Section 320 work plan included representing NBEP's new mission, ensuring the plan was inclusive of our study area, removing five tasks that were completed, adding three new tasks discussed at the last EC and SC meetings, adding five references to the Guiding Principles, not obligating to submit a specific number of funding proposals, specifying use of \$75,000 in NBEP/Vision 2032 support contracts, adding new subawards for capacity, research, and planning totaling \$158,750, and providing a new work plan and budget for FY20 SNEP funds, where \$198,832 will be provided as subawards. All told, NBEP expects to provide \$433k to external parties next fiscal year (47% of FY20 funds awarded).

The following feedback on the draft work plan and budget package was provided by the EC during the meeting:

- Footnote the first mention of the Guiding Principles to say the version approved on February 7, 2018 and any superseding versions approved by the SC apply.
- Add a specific reference to creating social science indicators under the Task 2a: Status and Trends Update.
- Clarified what type subawards would be issues in the Outputs and Outcomes tables as appropriate.
- Clarified that NBEP will offer technical support to at least 20 projects under Task 3b.
- Added that contracts between NEIWPC and those awarded SNEP funds in FY19 will be extended one year.
- Added lunch costs for three Blackstone River Watershed Needs Assessment meetings.
- Reduced the amount of study area research grants by \$1260 to accommodate Blackstone lunch costs.
- For both the Section 320 and SNEP funds, clarified that NBEP participates in SNEP efforts both as a member of program committees and a distributor of funding.
- For both the Section 320 and SNEP funds, used the term "SNEP Network."

Mike obligated to create a revised version of the work plan and budget documents and share them with the EC later today and request any further suggested revisions.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Mike will develop and send out to the group later today a version of the work plan and budget revised based on today's discussion.
2. Mike will send out a Doodle poll this week to schedule a follow-up meeting in late May.
3. Mike will send out the final draft work plan and budget package to the EC a week before the follow-up meeting in May.
4. Caitlin will reach out to David Gregg to inquire about his interest in the Chair position.

5. To accommodate the group's decision to meet four times a year just prior to an SC meet, NBEP will update the website and Outlook invite ASAP to remove the July 14th EC meeting. The September 8th and November 10th meetings will remain.
6. Mike will revise the Steering Committee Expectations document as directed and share with the SC prior to their next meeting on June 24th.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Mike reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule. See details below:

- The next Vision 2032 Subcommittee is scheduled for June 18th from 10am-12pm via Zoom.
- The next Steering Committee meeting is June 24th from 10am-12pm via Zoom.
- The next EC meeting will now be September 8th at a location TBD.