



Meeting Minutes
Weir River Estuary Park
Committee
Thursday May 21st, 2020
Remote Cohasset Webinar via Zoom

The Weir River Estuary Park (WREP) is a Tri-Town Committee, appointed by the Boards of Selectmen for Cohasset, Hingham and Hull (not a non-profit Watershed Association) to enable a healthy Weir River Estuary natural resource. As a Massachusetts designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and as a part of the Massachusetts Bays National Estuary, WREP was formed in 2002 to advocate for this Natural Resource (as indicated in WREP Land Protection Plan; see Hingham Conservation Commission web-site). WREP participates in and supports each town's Master Plan and/or Open Space Plan to include the Weir River estuary through: 1) Land protection, 2) Conservation and restoration of wild life healthy habitats, 3) Stewardship education, and 4) Recreation which supports habitat protection

1. **Call to Order:** Members present – Sharon Allen (Hingham), Dick Avery (Cohasset), Tom Bell (Cohasset), Patti Coyle (Hingham). Guests: Scott Plympton, Judeth Van Hamm and Hull resident / Hingham Land Conservation Trust (LCT) member Don Kidston, who has expressed interest in joining WREPComm. The meeting began at ~4:20pm. The minutes from the previous remote teleconference with Hingham Zoom were approved, with some changes, for posting. No other votes were taken. Patti Coyle chaired the meeting and agreed to produce the minutes.
2. **Activities for FY2020/2021 (April-Sept, 2020) considering COVID-19** since last meeting (March 26, 2020)
 - a) **Fish Count at Foundry Pond (April 1st-May 31st):** Tom Bell reported that ~25 fish were observed passing over the fish ladder so far during the 2020 herring run; an improvement, since volunteers didn't see any fish last year. This may indicate as many as 100-200 herring have migrated into Foundry Pond. A handful of neighbors joined NSRWA's fish count efforts for 10-minute intervals (one of the nearby teens spotted a herring in the ladder on his first visit!), and a small group of fishing enthusiasts, including Tom, Daniel Wells (HinghamLCT) settled in for their 2-hour shifts; Don Kidston did 26 10-minute shifts. Mother Nature teased organizers into an April 1st start with early warm weather and sightings of school-activity in the ocean, but the cool days and cold nights returned. Water flows and temperatures below 50°F kept the herring out of the ladders in Weymouth later than the April 15th-norm. The Weir and Weymouth Back River estuaries have many geographic and environmental similarities, but the Weymouth Fish Warden was seeing hundreds of herring daily swimming up the ladders on their way to Whitman Pond, where they were spawned. Tom plans to collect information about the long-standing issues with the design of the dam, rip rap and fish ladders at Foundry Pond, with hope to open a dialogue with the Town of Hingham to begin to alleviate / improve the situation here, where herring were once plentiful.
 - b) **Spring Clean-up (April 25th):** WREPComm reached several thousand people on Facebook promoting this annual event. With no cook-out or organization points this year, we pretty much said "Practice Social Distancing as well as Social Responsibility to honor the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day". Neighbors in all three towns had been out walking under COVID-19 protocol, often picking up trash along the way. Several residents and walkers along Straits Pond cleaned up some of the tougher to reach patches of litter. No large objects needed removal this year. On 4/25, Rockland St. had Bill Sarni & grandson in their golf-cart at Amonte Meadow; Patti Coyle picked-up ~3/4 bag of plastic straws, nips and chewing tobacco cans at Lyford's Lyking. Neighbors Holly Sarni Pilotte, Judy Kwong and their kids policed the east-bound side of Rockland and Kilby. The Allen family tidied the Kilby St. side of Foundry Pond, where some visitors ignore the "No Dumping" sign; the Weir St trails were in good shape (thanks Fish Counters!) Hingham-Weir River

neighbors were at the Estuary Center to clean-up out back; this former West Coast fisherman might be persuaded to join WREPComm.

- c) World Fish Migration Day (**May 15th – 16th**): this event had been re-scheduled to October by global organizers; Plymouth 400 events were canceled until further notice. The good news is our slideshow “*Connecting Fish, Rivers & People*” reached ~1,750 people on Facebook in May while the herring were running here.
 - d) 2020 Hingham **4th of July Parade** officially canceled on May 11th: The Parade Committee had announced the 2020 theme – “*Unity In Community*” – on Facebook March 13th by sharing one of WREPComm’s Spring Clean-up posts; COVID-19 protocols began shortly thereafter. Looking forward to next year!
 - e) National Estuaries Week (**September 19th-26th**): Patti made contact with Hingham Public Library Director about possibly having a Weir River Estuary art exhibit in the Dolphin and/or Clemens galleries – virtual or on-site – in September, and was encouraged to fill out an application; she will connect with tri-town and other artists (painters, photographers, drone videographers, decoy carvers, etc.) to see what we can come up with. She also spoke with the head of The Gulf Association about the possibility of that Cohasset group joining us in this event (<https://sites.google.com/site/thegulfassociationinc/home>).
- 3. Brief Updates of other items:** Dick Avery reported that the “midges are horrendous right now!” at Straits Pond. Residents have been filling the Straits Pond Watershed Assoc. (SPWA) e-mail box with complaints; Hull Conservation has been contacted and is responding. Many variables will have to be considered to address this problem now and in the future; salinity-levels, however, are currently at what has been considered appropriate to keep midges away. There are concerns that tide gate actions did leave flats exposed which may be connected to the scourge. Dick and Tom are hoping residents can capture a few specimens in a jar to help identify exactly which of the ~2,500 species of midge is making life miserable. Scott Plympton shared that the Hull Land Conservation Trust (HuLCT) is looking forward to receiving reimbursement for the Weir River Woods Conservation Restriction (CR) from the Hull Community Preservation Committee (CPC) [see July & September 2019 meeting minutes]. Dick then brought up that the Cohasset Conservation Trust (CCT) might be willing to transfer its interest in the Winsor Shores property in Hull to HuLCT, which did not exist at the time the parcel was donated; use of parking spots by non-pond related users, especially at night, is an issue regardless of ownership. Scott also shared that Hank Herman rebuilt the planter boxes at the entrance to town, and that his Nantasket Kayaks is open for the season. Members encouraged Scott to get lots of photos from a water-level perspective to help celebrate National Estuaries Week in September!
- 4.** Discussion for going forward – committee roles & rotation, procedures, purpose: We still have no news regarding Hull’s Board of Selectmen making any decision regarding the reinstatement of that Town’s membership in this tri-town committee; it’s been six months since Judeth Van Hamm officially informed us that there is no WREPComm in Hull. While Patti expressed feeling disheartened at the lack of progress, other members noted that there have been higher priorities these last few months, a potential Hull member has attended 4 of our last 6 meetings, and that we are in a good position at this point to reach our 20th anniversary as a tri-Town municipal committee in 2022. Sharon noted that she felt it was important for members and others to remember what WREPComm’s original purpose was back in 2002, which she included in the brief introduction to our 3/26/2020 meeting minutes.
- 5.** Next meeting: 4pm Thursday June 18th to approve the 5/26 meeting minutes for posting & close FY2020.
- 6.** Adjourn 5:31pm