

Danvers River Committee
Thursday, April 20, 2023
Meeting Minutes

The Danvers River Committee held a public meeting on Thursday, April 20, 2023, at the Endicott Park Visitors Center (Conference Room) at 6:00pm.

Member(s) present: Matthew Byrne, Chair
Dan DeLorenzo
Bill Ciesinski
Bill Fouhey
Louie George
Robert Hemeon
Michael McCarthy
Tom Perry
Gardner Trask, Selectman Liaison

Member(s) absent: Andrea Daley
Bob Moore

Staff Present: Christopher Sanborn, Director of Natural Resources
Carolann Powers, Secretary

Media Present: None

Matt Byrne called meeting called to order at 6:03pm.

Secretary's Report:

The committee was asked to accept the minutes of the February 16, 2023, meeting.

Motion: Made by Louie George, seconded by Bill Ciesinski to accept the minutes of the February 16, 2023; All in favor: 8:0.

New Business:

Chris spoke about the continued effort to clean up old Crease & Cook property & the Crane River. Georgia Pendergast in Land Use and Community Services said this cleanup will continue in 2024. Chris S. shared a map of the property and the area with the committee. Bill C. asked what they plan to do with the area once cleaned. Chris S. said he assumes a shoreline restoration similar to the Szytko Bridge area will be done. Bill C. asked how long project will take? Chris said approximately 33 months according to plan he has seen. Louie G. asked if all the property involved was private? Chris S. said yes to

his knowledge. Matt B. suspected some of the property in that area may owe back taxes, if that is the case and if not paid may he suspected that land may be taken by the town.

Chris informed the group that 650 Waterways permits issued to date. This is a far larger return to date than previous years. He noted in addition he has not received any negative feedback in regard to increase in the dockage fees. He told the committee that there are currently 27 boaters on the Mooring Waitlist and 38 boaters on town Marina Waitlist.

Louie George gave a brief presentation re: CPA (Community Preservation Act). CPA is on the ballot for the Town's May election. He is in support of CPA and felt it may directly affect the work the River Committee does, specifically recreation-based projects such as the revitalization of Sandy Beach, Lebel's Grove, and open space areas. He noted Peabody, Beverly & Salem are just some of the surrounding communities that have voted to adopt CPA. He shared an FAQ/information sheet with the committee. He noted residents' real estate taxes will increase by a 1% surtax. This is the lowest surcharge possible to adopt the CPA fund, lower than surrounding towns who have adopted CPA. If the town votes for CPA based on 2022 figures the town would have received a little over 1.2 million dollars. He noted an appointed committee will establish ideas for projects that would use the CPA funds and all ideas would need to go before town meeting for ultimate approval. He thanked the committee for their time and consideration and noted he felt CPA it is a great way to make Danvers an even better town.

Mike McCarthy likes idea of being able to make improvements to Sandy Beach. He asked if the 1% increase would be increased incrementally over the course of the years. If so, he is concerned and was curious about capping the surcharge at 1%. Louie G. said town voters would need to vote to increase the surcharge if there was a desire to do so.

Bill C. asked if CPA funds could be used for dredging. Louie G. said he was not sure. Other members noted the river is passive recreation and wondered if it is possible as well. Tom P asked if there was a cap on what age bracket this surcharge tax would be charged to.

Dan D. asked if the state matches dollar for dollar exact with CPA. Louie G. said not dollar for dollar but they match a percentage based on the rate of the surcharge so it would likely be 30%.

Bill F. asked if the town would have to apply for projects similar to applying for grants. Louie said no that it would go through the town CPA Committee and then to Town Meeting. Matt B. asked how the committee spends the funds. Louie said they can stockpile funds; they don't have to be spent all in one year. He noted any expenditure of those funds has to be approved by Town Meeting. Louie noted that the town will decide who will be appointed to the CPA Committee, this committee would make the spending recommendations. Matt Byrne said it potentially should be written into an article to avoid abuse of the funds and other issues.

Old Business:

Chris said parking at Popes Landing has become a big issue and some are abusing it. The parking lot is regulated and is to be used only for boater use under the State Land Management Agreement (LMA) with the State Office of Fishing and Boating Access. Chris had some signage made that clearly notes what is acceptable parking uses of the lot. Chris is not sure if they are at the point of ticketing vehicles. Chris is concerned that managing the parking issue may inadvertently shift the parking issue for the Popes Landing lot to the surrounding neighborhood. Chris said they are being proactive to solve the issue prior to the boating season. Some business owners have inquired with the town to see if they can rent spaces in the lot. The town confirmed with the state that this is not an acceptable usage via the state Land Management Agreement, Matt B. noted that it doesn't seem right to rent spaces in a public lot to private businesses when recently we denied rental to local lobstermen for storage of their traps in the off season. Mike C. asked if the lot is full where do boaters go to park. Chris said last season the Harbormaster Staff did a great job on weekends managing the lot, so it was not an issue, but on weekdays it was a much bigger problem when businesses were open. It was asked if the town can issue a local parking ticket for a State Land Management agreement site. It is town owned land, but because of the LMA the town may not be able to ticket. We operate the facilities on this property and can establish fees for related services on the property, such as launching fess. Mike M. asked if we could charge a fee to park in this lot. Chris said not sure the State LMA Board would approve. Tom P. asked if we could charge kayakers who launch from Popes Landing. Chris said we haven't, but we could consider charging for them. The State Office of fishing Boating Access has sent a letter to the Harbor Master Dept. to send to Elliott Health at 10 Harbor St. as well as other businesses on Liberty St. who are in violation of the parking rules. Matt B. felt the bottom line is it is town property and should not be available for private use, he noted if health care facilities are exempt that does not seem right. Tom P. said a letter should be sent to all neighboring businesses regarding the parking concerns. Matt B. asked if the parking lot could be re-lined to accommodate more vehicles and be more efficient. It was noted that although the lot's intended use is for boat trailer parking, they currently will not restrict visitors from using the picnic area or simply having lunch in their vehicles.

Mr. Bradstreet said he frequents the lot and enjoys the park, he noted many vehicles are parked there with no passengers, suspects they are not using park. He asked if it is considered a public lot should it allow general parking. He also noted recently seeing kids wandering around on the docks and going on boats. Chris did say they have security cameras and can view the footage and address this if it is a problem.

Chris S. noted they will close off the back parking lot during the week and will cone it off and manage it on weekends in season.

It was noted that the State earmarked \$125K ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds allocation for waterfront improvements. It will be used for updates to the town marina gangway pier and surveying of the area.

The Kernwood Bridge in Beverly is back to operational on a regular schedule at this time after undergoing repairs over the last two months that limited navigation. With the work completed they are hoping for a season without any further bridge problems.

Louie G. asked the status of the Whitaker Bridge repair project on Bridge St. Beverly. The timeline is unknown, but that project was scheduled further out than the Kernwood Bridge.

Chris told the committee that his staff will be participating in an oil spill training drill with Mass DEP and noted that other area Harbormaster and Fire Departments will participate in the drill as well.

It was asked if Pump Out Boat will be operational this year. Chris said yes, two employees are returning to operate the boat and facilitate the program. This year it will operate via a call-in system. When a boater calls while on their boat in harbor the Pump Out Boat will go over to service them.

Dan D. asked about renewal of River Committee members at the upcoming annual Town Meeting. Mike McCarthy said if there is a need for new members, he knows of others who may be interested. Chris S. referred them to the town website to apply via the talent pool application if interested.

Bill C. asked if proposal to build apartments in the area of the Home for the Deaf involves the River Committee. Chris Sanborn said it is not on the river so no, but Louie G. said he believed the original plan was not approved for now. Mike M. said he ask for an environmental study to be performed in that area as there is eagle nest in that vicinity.

Motion: Motion made by Bill Fouhey, seconded by Louis George, to adjourn the meeting of April 20, 2023. All in favor: 8:0

cc: Steve Bartha, Town Manager
David Mountain, Recreation Director