

**Project Oceanology
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2024 – 4:00pm**

Attendance BOARD MEMBER	ORGANIZATION	OFFICERS	ATTENDANCE *
Joshua Fish	Bozrah		<i>Excused</i>
Jennifer Andrews	Columbia		Present
Eleanor Mariani	Community Mbr		Present
Kate Biddle	Community Mbr	Secretary	Present
Robin Harris	Community Mbr		Present
Tom Gardiner	Community Mbr		Present
Annaliese Spaziano	East Lyme		Present
Jason England	Groton	Treasurer	Present
David Bednarz	Ledyard		<i>Excused</i>
Kathy Howard	MSMHS	Chair	Present
Jenn Hills-Papetti	New London		Present
Monica Swyden	NFA		Present
Lisa England	Preston		Present
Penny Phipps	Salem		<i>Absent</i>
Cassidy Corey	Sprague		Present
Nat Trumbull	UConn		Present
Mike O'Connor	Waterford		Present
J. Andrew Ely	Project O	Ex-officio	Present
PUBLIC			
Callie Scheetz	Project O		Present
Leslie Labry	Project O		Present
Janet Farquar	New London		Present

*18 present including 15 board members

1. The meeting was called to order at 4:08 p.m. by Jay England, Treasurer. A quorum was established.

2. Reviewed minutes of October 10, 2024 meeting. **Motion to accept minutes as presented at 4: 09 p.m. by Mike OConnor/2nd Lisa England. Unanimous.**

3. Public comments: None.

4. Chairman's remarks to the Board – Chair, Kathy Howard: Wants to take time at the end of this year to slow down and reflect on our successes.

5. Executive Director's report - Andrew Ely highlighted the following information mostly from his written report for the Board:

Budget Finance

- a. Later in the meeting we will hear from the budget committee on 2025-2026 member pricing proposal.
- b. Our annual audit by Doherty, Beals, and Banks is complete and preliminary feedback is positive, the Board will hear a formal Audit report early in 2025.

Grants activities/update

- a. The NOAA B-WET 2024 grant is approved to start in August of 2025.
- c. Norwich public schools awarded Project Oceanology a grant for afterschool programs.
- d. The Kiwanis Club of New London awarded Project Oceanology a grant to support STEM programming at C.B. Jennings School in New London.
- e. The Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed received a grant from Long Island Sound Community Impact Fund to work with schools in the region; Project Oceanology is a sub awardee and will provide programming.
- f. Project Oceanology will submit a letter of intent to apply for the next round of Long Island Sound Community Investment Fund grants, due 22 November.
- h. CT Sea Grant will provide Project Oceanology with funds to support the CT River Connections program including funds for buses and possibly funds for translator services.
- i. Andrew is going to meet with a state representatives Aundre Bumgardner and Anthony Nolan try to get funding and will likely send out letters of support for board members to give to their superintendents and will ask for letters of support to send to legislators.

School Year Programs

- a. The 2025-2026 membership fees have been drafted for review.
- b. The Quahog Bowl will be February 8, 2025. There are already 7 teams signed up.

Summer Camps

- a. Prices for camp this summer have also been modified based on increasing operational costs including meals, staff, and insurance.
- b. With the new pricing we expect to break even due to increased costs.

Staff

- a. Haylie Schwarzenbach has joined a research team to study Doris, a Nudibranch that has been found attached to abandoned lobster traps recovered from Long Island Sound. This work is expected to result in a publication.
- b. Amy Stockburger is spending more time piloting Enviro-Lab II and will likely be doing so on her own soon.

Administration/Logistics

- a. Shennecossett Yacht Club has agreed to remove a vessel that created a safety hazard for mooring Enviro-Lab II.

Outreach/Media:

- a. GO (Get Outdoors) Groton held their first outreach event at Project Oceanology and will be working with Project Oceanology among others to implement their objectives.
- b. Andrew recently joined federal representatives and industry leaders for the announcement of \$39M for projects that include community outreach and education under the EPA's Clean Ports Program in CT.

6. Committee Reports:

a. Executive Committee – Kathy Howard, Chair

The Executive Committee met on October 24, 2024. The committee reviewed the operational structure so that staff at Project Oceanology know who they report to, the chain of communication, and the needs of the organization. We discussed expanding opportunities for staff members, vessel acquisition, and fundraising. The personnel committee is going to meet soon to look at job descriptions to make sure these are up to date and correct. Andrew is trying to find a way to support a capital campaign for a new vessel. We also need to come up with fundraising strategies to continue to support the financial needs of the organization. In terms of the vessel search, after looking at our historical data it seems we might not need as big of a vessel as we have been looking for; recent data analysis shows that our average passenger count is 32 and that less than 10% of our trips have more than 50 passengers aboard. It was suggested to consider having different size boats to be able to meet a variety of needs and this might increase options in our vessel search. In addition, we want to shift to be more proactive and plan to acquire a new boat now but also work towards being ready to replace Enviro-Lab II when needed.

b. Personnel Committee – n/a

c. Programs Committee – n/a

d. Budget Committee – Tom Gardiner, Chair

The budget committee met October 31, 2024 to discuss program pricing for 2025-2026. Costs including insurance, staffing, and general operating expenses have increased and the new member pricing reflects this. The budget committee went through the proposed price list line by line to approve and voted to move forward with the new member pricing proposal.

7. Review and approval of 2025-26 Member pricing and income proposal:

As a Board we approve member pricing at the November board meeting so schools can budget for the upcoming year. We looked at 3 price lists including the 2023-2024, 2024-2025 price lists and the proposed 2025-2026 price list to review pricing history and discuss logic behind proposed prices. In our price structure there are three categories of discounted pricing: member, subscriber (must take 3 boats/year, typically bigger schools, on outskirts of CT, get small discount) and school. There is a fourth price – regular prices used for corporations and other for-profit entities. The price list details the programs available and prices as well as add on services including additional educators for larger groups, skiffs to

support programs, and use of the hostel. Camp prices have been added to the price list this year as well.

The 2025-2026 school year membership proposal was presented by Andrew, it is based on each members programing for the current year with the proposed 2025-26 price list applied to determine cost. Total member income for 2025-26 is projected to be \$312,280. These numbers may change if schools want to change their programming as our new membership rules allow. Andrew will communicate with each member school about program pricing.

Andrew was asked if the new membership structure was helpful to recruit new member schools. He noted that since we have moved to charge what we anticipate the programming will actually cost for each member school the price structure is easier to explain; it is transparent. Andrew noted that the membership income for next year will be about the same as this year despite price increases as one member school is departing. We are hoping to bring on new schools and are working to find other sources of income to support Project Oceanology.

Andrew requested a motion to accept the 2025-26 price list and the proposed member income of \$312,280 as presented. **Motion to accept proposal at 4:56 p.m. by Tom Gardinier/ Mike O'Connor 2nd. Unanimous.**

8. The Board reviewed the upcoming meeting and committee meeting dates with no changes:

a. Board meeting dates:

- i. January 30, 2025
- ii. February 20, 2025
- iii. March 13, 2025
- iv. April 24, 2025
- v. May 29, 2025

b. Committee meeting dates:

- i. Personnel Committee – November 21, 2025
- ii. Programs Committee – November 26, 2025

9. **Motion to Adjourn was made at 5:07 p.m. by Jason England/Elenor Mariani 2nd. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Biddle, Community Board Member and Secretary

