Project Oceanology
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
October 10, 2024 - 4:00pm

Attendance:

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

*15 present including 14 board members

1. The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Kathy Howard, Chair. A quorum was established.

2. Reviewed minutes of September 12, 2024 meeting. **Motion to accept minutes as presented at 4:01 p.m. by Eleanor Mariani/2nd Jason England. Joshua Fish, Annaliese Spaziano, and Penny Phipps abstained. Motion passed.**

3. Public comments: None.

4. Chairman's remarks to the Board – Chair, Kathy Howard: The fall season is well underway! Lots of boat, shoreline, lab, and in school programs – everyone is in full swing. Andrew will fill you in on a couple of staffing updates, so I thank you all again for taking time out of your busy day. Your feedback, suggestions, and input is truly valued.
5. Executive Director's report – Andrew Ely highlighted the following information from his written report for the Board:
   Budget/Finance: A review of our current budget for the year was conducted. Andrew noted that next month the Board would be voting on membership fees for the 2025-

26 school year and that the Budget Committee would be meeting in the interim to review the proposal for presentation to the Board.
Andrew discussed the need to pivot our funding strategy for the year and future years. Points included:
- We will defer work for NOAA's B-WET 2024 grant to start in August of 2025 to accommodate delays in final grant approval through the eRA Commons funding platform now used for all NOAA grants.
- Andrew is pursuing discussions with state legislators to peruse a line item for vessel maintenance as a part of the State FY25 budget build. Several members of the board supported this idea. While this was attempted once in the past it was with a single legislators' letter Andrew recommends building broad support across member school district state representatives and senators. While Project Oceanology has had success in attaining program delivery grant funds we are still challenged with the high costs of vessel operations and maintenance. This strategy is based on the reduction in CSDE Interdistrict Grant funds which are capped at $100K per year and only available to about 15 organizations each grant cycle. Discussion from Board Members supported this approach – focusing on a line item for maintenance in the state budget.

Andrew also reviewed the status of the LPL investment and cash accounts explaining recent account activity.

Grant activities: We have confirmed the path ahead to carry out the next round of NOAA B-WET funding will be moved to August of 2025. Andrew and Callie are modifying the required paperwork required with NOAA to complete this change. This change is based on delays in the grant fund system (eRA Commons) that NOAA is required to use to distribute and manage funds.

The removal of abandoned lobster gear continues through grant funding. A new spinoff of this project is research on Nudibranchs that we have been finding on some of the recovered traps. Haylie Schwarzenbach is participating in this research and will be a contributing author on a paper about this work lead by Dr. Sarah Crosby of The Maritime Aquarium.

School Year Programs: Next month the board will vote on 2025-26 membership fees, after school programing is underway at ISAAC and will be starting in Groton and Stonington later this month.

Summer Camps: Summer camp tuition will have to increase for next summer to account for the rising costs associated with staff, food, insurance, lease, and materials.

Staff: Welcome to Sydney Buckley who has joined the education team part-time. Sydney, who is also a part-time educator at the Mystic Aquarium will lead our after-school programs and support other programing throughout the year.

Administration/logistics: Work completed during Enviro-Lab II's most recent dry dock was discussed including repairs to the hull, keel, and watertight hatches on the fore and aft deck.

Outreach: Andrew highlighted his attendance at a recent legal seminar for nonprofits that has helped him identify areas for continued work to improve our administrative and HR procedures and policies.

Earlier today we hosted a successful media event to discuss the most recent results of the Unified Water Study lead by Save the Sound. Partners and community leaders joined together to review the 2024 LIS Report Card at Project Oceanology.

6. Committee Membership and Reports:
    a. Andrew Ely noted that there is space for members to join committees and that the Program Committee would benefit from at least one additional member. Following the meeting Andrew will send a note to all board members about committee membership seeking interested candidates to sign up for committees.
    b. Executive Committee – n/a
    c. Personnel Committee – n/a
    d. Program Committee – n/a
    e. Budget Committee – n/a
    f. Vessel Search Committee – n/a

7. The board reviewed the established meeting dates for the remainder of 2024/2025:
    a. November 14, 2024
    b. January 30, 2025
    c. February 20, 2025
    d. March 13, 2025
    e. April 24, 2025
    f. May 29, 2024

8. The board discussed upcoming committee meetings.
    a. The Executive Committee will meet at 4p.m. on October 24, 2024
    b. The Budget Committee will meet at 4 p.m. on October 31, 2024
    c. Dates will be coordinated for Personnel and Program Committee meetings by email after the Board meeting.

9. **Motion to Adjourn was made at 4:53 p.m. by Joshua Fish/2nd Lisa England. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Ely, Executive Director and Ex-officio Board Member