

**Project Oceanology
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
April 18, 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		Present
Robin Harris	Community Mbr		Present
Tom Gardiner	Community Mbr		Present
Lisa Vaudreuil	East Lyme		Present
Jason England	Groton	Treasurer	Present
Bill Linski	ISAAC		<i>Absent</i>
David Bednarz	Ledyard		<i>Absent</i>
Kathy Howard	MSMHS	Chair	Present
Jenn Hills-Papetti	New London		<i>Absent</i>
Monica Swyden	NFA		Present
Lisa England	Preston		Present
Laura Runkle	Salem		<i>Absent</i>
Suzanne Scorza	Sprague	Secretary	<i>Excused</i>
Nat Trumbull	UConn		<i>Excused</i>
Mike O'Connor	Waterford		Present
J. Andrew Ely	Project O	Ex-officio	Present
PUBLIC			
Callie Scheetz	Project O		Present
Jack Zamar	Bozrah		Present

*15 present including 13 board members

1. The meeting was called to order at 4:05p.m. by Kathy Howard, Chair. A quorum was established.
2. Public comments: Callie Scheetz shared news about a Bobtail Squid that was caught last week in the trawl
3. Reviewed minutes of March 7, 2024 meeting. **Motion to accept minutes as presented at 4:10 p.m. by Robin Harris/2nd Joshua Fish. Unanimous.**
4. Chairman’s remarks to the Board – Chair, Kathy Howard, commented on the increased level of activity required to deliver Project Oceanology programs in the spring months. She spoke from her experience as a prior Project Oceanology employee and teacher using the programs and thanked the staff for their efforts and flexibility with the weather to continue to deliver programs. She also commented on Andrew’s two plus years of service as Executive Director and the speed with which he is taking on unexpected challenges and working to continue to deliver

strong educational programs to Project Oceanology members and other users of our services.

5. Executive Director's report – *Budget/Finance*: Andrew highlighted that we are on track to finish the year ahead of our planned budget with a small positive in our net income and not a loss. He also noted the continued strong performance of our investment accounts.

Grant activities: The next NOAA B-WET program funding notification is anticipated in late spring/early summer. If we are successful, this funding will be used to deliver school programs for the next two years. Andrew provided a review of grant programs that we are currently working on for next year.

School Year Programs: Capitol Hill Ocean Week attendees have been selected from 12 applicants for the program. Thank you to the teachers who encouraged students to apply for this opportunity.

Public Programs: Many programs coming up later this month including Family Day, our last Seal Watch for the spring, and Earth Day events.

Summer Camps: Camps are selling out, we still have capacity in Ocean Explorer Academy, Marine Science Research Camp, and Ocean Camp. We have completed our summer intern hiring. We still have tuition assistance available for families who need financial support, refer to the Executive Director's report or the Project Oceanology website for the tuition assistance application.

Staff: Several members of the staff have been attending training that supports educational programs we deliver, thanks to all who attended the ECTy awards including board member Robin Harris.

Administration/Logistics: Application for Trademark of our name and logo are progressing and should be filed in the coming month. Our website is being redesigned and moved from Wix to Wordpress by the 118 Group; this project is grant funded, will help customers better find and understand the programs we offer, and should be completed around the start of the next school year.

Outreach: Grasso Tech welding shop teachers visited Project O to identify projects for next school year including welding new aluminum storage racks for our wet room gear and lifejackets. Project Oceanology is a founding member of the Connecticut Blue Economy Coalition with a broad range of industry and education partners, among this coalitions objectives are supporting growth and stability of the blue economy through education.

6. Committee Membership and Reports:

- a. Executive Committee n/a
- b. Personnel Committee – n/a
- c. Program Committee – n/a
- d. Budget Committee – Tom Gardiner provided a report of the budget committee's last meeting on March 28, 2024 to review the proposed FY25 budget. Tom discussed the overall income and expenses highlighting that the budget proposed takes into consideration operations with one research vessel. Tom also noted that the Department of Labor has a pending rule change that will, if enacted, impact exempt vs. non-exempt employee status.
- e. Vessel Search Committee – Andrew provided an update on the vessel search. He noted that the survey of the M/V Keyport Princess results were not

favorable due to moisture and fiberglass delamination issues in the hull and superstructure. The search for suitable vessels continues. Work is also being accomplished with Senator Murphy and Congressman Courtney staffs to submit applications for funds to acquire a replacement vessel for Enviro-Lab III.

7. Executive Session for business matters: **Motion to enter Executive Session** for business matters **at 4:40 p.m. by Mike O'Connor/2nd by Eleanor Mariani. Unanimous. Motion to come out of Executive Session with no motions to be filed at 4:55 p.m by Josh Fish/2nd by Lisa Vaudreuil. Unanimous.**
8. 2024 -2025 (FY25) budget proposal: Andrew reviewed the entire proposed budget by income and expenses. The specific items that comprise income and expense categories were discussed. Significant changes in the proposed budget for next year from the current approved budget were also discussed. Andrew explained reasons for increases or decreases as appropriate. Significant changes addressed included: Income - decreasing member fees under the new membership program, increases in single program and summer camp revenue. Expenses – personal services, planned raises linked to performance and qualifications and an anticipated 18% increase in medical/dental insurance; a smaller work list for Enviro-Lab II's yard period this year and reductions to professional services with only research vessel to maintain. Andrew also pointed out areas where expenses have been trimmed to keep a balanced budget including additional staff training, advertising, and supplies. **Motion to accept the proposed budget as presented was made at 5:05p.m. by Josh Fish/2nd by Mike O'Connor. Unanimous.**
9. The board confirmed the following meeting dates for the remainder of the current school year:
 - a. May 9, 2024
 - b. June 7, 2024
- 10. Motion to Adjourn was made at 5:10p.m. by Mike O'Connor/2nd Eleanor Mariani. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Ely, Ex-officio board member on behalf of Suzanne Scorza, Secretary