

Minutes
Winter River - Tracadie Bay Watershed Association
Board of Directors Meeting

Grand Tracadie School
October 22, 2013, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Present:

Ben Hoteling
Bruce Smith
Cathy Corrigan
Don Mazer

George Coade
John Hughes
Lowell Vessey
Sarah Wheatley

1. Welcome

The meeting was convened with a majority of board members present.

2. Review of minutes from last board meeting

The minutes from the September board meeting were read and accepted.

3. Water Extraction Issues

- a. We've had a lot of email back and forth since the September 24 meeting with the Province and City, and have now drafted a letter and an article which we will discuss today.
- b. It is important to note that this was the first time all three parties sat down at the same table to talk. There was some back and forth discussion at that meeting, but mostly groups were just reiterating their positions.
- c. At this meeting, we learned from Bruce Raymond that any water extraction reductions at Brackley will be added to the pumping from Suffolk. Milton seems to be for growth and system redundancy, but there will be no net reduction of extraction from the Winter River system once Milton is operational. We really thought there would be a net reduction from our watershed when Milton came online. But the current plan seems to be that they will pump a very small amount of water to start, and then increase extraction as the City demand grows. There is no plan to run Milton at full capacity now and allow a decrease from our watershed. And since Milton is new, it must meet the criteria set out in the new water extraction policy (they are not subject to the 'grandfather clause' which allows them to pump more than the new policy would allow from our watershed).
 - i. **UPDATE:** After a subsequent meeting which our local MLAs helped to organize with Jim Young from the Department of Environment, it seems that there was a lot of miscommunication during this meeting with the City and the Province. When the Miltonvale wellfield becomes operational, there will be an immediate reduction in extraction from the Winter River, although the amount and length of time on the reduction is dependent upon the productivity of the new wells at Miltonvale.
- d. We also learned that DFO sent a uniformed officer (which included wearing a weapon) to City Hall one day.
- e. The City mainly focused on financial considerations of water extraction – their goal is to provide water to city residents at low prices.
- f. The groups had very different perspectives on issues.
- g. With regard to the absence of consultation on new water extraction policy, the province said that government can't consult people on every issue. At the Heritage Rivers conference held in early summer, George Somers said they had been working on the new policy since 2007, which seems long enough for the topic to at least be mentioned to us.
- h. The new policy isn't as rigorous as some scientific papers suggest that it should be. For example, it doesn't appear to follow all of the recommendations of the Canadian Rivers Institute report, which was prepared for the province in 2009.
- i. Bruce mentioned that previously we had asked if Brackley streams would ever go dry with the new policy and were told "no". But at the meeting, we were told that it could go dry during some drier

years. The policy was based on the stream not going dry in an average year (based on a ten year average). However, no water in a dry year means no fish. Has anyone consulted Rosie McFarlane, the PEI fisheries biologist to see if PEI rivers “normally” go dry, and/or the implications of periodically dry streams on fish populations.

- j. There seemed to be no concern that extraction from Suffolk and Union exceeded the permitted amounts. Apparently since they had made reductions at Brackley they were ‘going in the right direction’ by taking more from the other areas. Soon the City will be getting a new permit which allows less at Brackley and more at Suffolk anyway. We thought that exceeding their permit should have led to more conservation measures being implemented.
- k. When we pushed to find out why the City didn’t implement more summertime water restrictions this summer, they said they didn’t think they needed to. During 2012 they “had to” conserve (and implemented one level of water restriction guidelines) because they couldn’t physically get enough water to supply demand. In 2013 they could still get the water they wanted, so there was no push to conserve further. (The 2012 guidelines became bylaws in 2013. The bylaw requiring the first (and more minimal) level of water reduction was used in 2013, but we thought the bylaw with more substantial reductions should also have been used). In 2013, the Malpeque pumping station was in use during the summer to provide additional capacity. The current conservation programs seem to be geared more toward public relations, rather than to substantial decreases in water usage.
- l. Meanwhile the farmers in our watershed cannot get permits to irrigate crops because the City needs the water. So city residents can water their lawns, but farmers here can’t water their crops.
- m. It was seen by some as a very “disheartening meeting”
- n. The City saw our media campaign as “antagonistic” while we thought we were increasing public awareness of the issue, which would hopefully lead to less water usage.
- o. The City said ‘we do what the province allows’
- p. The province kept mentioning ‘redistribution’ – more wells at Suffolk because it is cheaper to stay near existing infrastructure.

4. Letter and article

Discussed the content of the draft letter and article in detail. This brought up questions about our relationship with the City going forward, and the future of the Association. Can we meet our mandate by just focussing on stream enhancement activities (water quality) and ignore the water quantity issue? But how do you enhance a stream that isn’t there? Any work related to improving fish habitat could be useless if the fish habitat will keep disappearing periodically as streams dry up. We have data from fishway monitoring that indicates there may be only one quarter as many fish now as there were when similar monitoring was conducted 15 years ago. Can our Association even continue to function and exist under the current circumstances? We will try to arrange a meeting with our local MLAs to see if we can get some more information and/or support, and table the letter and article at present.

5. Treasurer’s Report

This report was emailed to board members prior to the meeting. The current financial status is good and we could consider different projects or initiatives for some of the money.

6. Coordinator’s Report

This report was distributed to board members prior to meeting.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be November 21.