



Harwich Ponds Coalition

www.harwichwaters.org

July 15, 2025

Minutes from the HPC Board Meeting

Steering Committee Meeting Attendees:

Susan Cyr - President
Ann Frechette - Vice President
Erik Skamstad - Treasurer
Hallie Vitolo - Secretary
John Kechum - Webmaster
Scott Norum
Diana Preston (via zoom)
Rich Walker
Donna Connolly
Patrick Otton

1. Approval of Meeting Notes

- The notes from the May 30, 2025 meeting were reviewed and approved unanimously.

2. Financial Update

- Erik confirmed that there is approximately \$825 in the HPC bank account and another \$430 in PayPal that can be transferred into the bank account at any time, totalling approximately \$1,255. There is no outstanding debt.
- Erik and John both had spreadsheets confirming who has signed up for a membership, who has paid and whether a Pond Pledge sign was purchased. There seemed to be some differences and Erik and John agreed to reconcile the lists. Erik and Donna reported that 23 signs had been purchased at this time and that there is a list of people interested in purchasing one. It was agreed that another batch of signs would be ordered by Donna and that she would then be reimbursed.

- Additional bookmarks are to be ordered. The price is \$74 for 100. The remaining bookmarks were given to Hallie to pass out at the Hinckley's Pond gathering in a couple weeks.
- John indicated that he had attended the annual WASH meeting on July 5th and that he had pitched membership in the HPC at this time. Susan agreed to follow up with the Six Ponds group to push participation and membership with HPC.

3. Website Review

- John is working through some website "glitches". He and Erik will work to create an "integrated PalPal Connection" so that the membership and Pond Pledge sign do not have to be two separate transactions. They will also work to make sure the PayPal allows three types of transactions: 1) membership, 2) Pond Pledge sign and 3) additional donation
- Ann provided an update on the Pond Pages. She indicated that she had just identified new information available at the library from the town annual reports dating back to the 1890s. The group agreed that we have sufficient information on about 20 of the ponds so she will work with John to get this information posted. Information on additional ponds can then be added down the road. The goal will be to have a specific link for each pond go to a separate page.

4. Testing Update

Scott has confirmed that the new PALS testing schedule will be for three samples each year: one in April, one in August and one in September. This will make the Harwich sampling consistent with other towns sampled as part of the PALS program. Stephanie also agreed to include one in July for all seven Harwich Ponds. The confirmed dates for this year are: July 23 and August 27. Scott noted that the test kits are not ready yet. Scott also noted that Stephanie is open to adding additional ponds in the future.

5. Flax Pond Discussion

The owner of the Lavender Farm contacted Ann regarding Flax Pond, claiming that Flax Pond is the most polluted pond in Harwich, as he stated that the pond gets runoff from the landfill. He is looking for the HPC to get involved. He noted that 36 acres had been purchased by the town for the land bank (to be used as open space or agricultural land). The land is currently under the care and custody of the Harwich Conservation Commission. The Tech School has proposed building a satellite campus on approximately 20 of these acres for environmental science and veterinary medicine. Whether it can be used this way will be researched by Amy of the Conservation Commission. After some discussion, it was determined that the HPC would

advocate for the testing of Flax Pond by the Conservation Commission and Natural Resources Department as part of the evaluation of the proposed change of use of that land and the overall evaluation of pond water quality.

6. Aquatic Hitchhikers

Patrick brought up the Aquatic Hitchhiker program. It was noted that the Town of Harwich is planning to order more signs and it was suggested that the postcards be handed out to boaters as they enter the boat ramp and that the rules should be handed out when the permit is obtained from the harbor master. Susan agreed to do some additional research on this topic.

7. Postcards to Pondfront Owners

The group discussed the design of a postcard to be sent to pondfront owners that would emphasize membership and the Pond Pledge. Hallie agreed to have her daughter work on the design and send to the group for approval. Patrick agreed to follow up on pricing for the postcards.

8. Pond Education/Advocacy

- The group discussed establishing periodic meetings with Stephanie (Natural Resources) and Amy (Conservation Commission). It was decided that Susan would request a meeting at the end of the summer for early October.
- Two separate groups were created to develop education documents and recommendations on the septic and fertilizer issues. Donna, Erik and Hallie agreed to work on the septic issue. Scott will develop some education materials for alternative septic systems, Ann will continue to work on the Pond Pages and Susan, Patrick, Rich and John will work on the fertilizer issue.

9. Wrap Up

- The next meeting was set for 3:00 pm on August 21st and will be held at Susan Cyr's house at 118 Headwaters Drive in Harwich
- Meeting adjourned