Friends of Barnstable Harbor

Annual Meeting

12 December 2024

Mass Audubon’s Long Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary

Discovery Center

6pm

Vice President Peter Eleftherakis opened the meeting at about 6pm by expressing thanks to President Jon Brink for his many contributions to the Friends of Barnstable Harbor (FBH). Jon has moved out of the Village; he sends his best from Peru. Peter also extended thanks to Colleen Mason, Treasurer, Rick Floyd, Secretary, and Jeb Handy, Cruise Committee Chair. Our popular fundraising cruise could not happen without the support of the Hyannis Whale Watch. Jack and Margaret Hill give us everything we need to make the cruise a success. Our thanks to them. Village businesses, the Town of Barnstable, and the Barnstable Association for Recreational Shellfishing all provide important support and deserve our thanks. Ian Ives and Mass Audubon have once again allowed us to use their Discovery Center for our Annual Meeting at no cost; we thank them for their partnership. Finally, Peter thanked those in attendance for their presence and support. Approximately thirty-five persons were present.

Peter next shared our updated Mission Statement:

*Friends of Barnstable Harbor is an* ***all-volunteer*** *nonprofit organization whose mission is uniting the harbor community in support of the preservation and protection of Barnstable Harbor, ensuring that future generations will continue to enjoy the bounty and beauty of its waters, marshes, and beaches.*

A quorum being present, the submitted ballots revealed the unanimous election of Directors and Officers for 2025 as proposed in the proxy which had been emailed to all members prior to the meeting.

Incoming Officers include the following:

Peter Eleftherakis, Co-President

Jeb Handy, Co-President

Mark Begley, Vice President

Colleen Mason, Treasurer

Rick Floyd, Secretary

Peter thanked all Directors and Officers for their willingness to serve. Peter asked for approval of the 2023 Annual Meeting minutes, which had also been emailed to all members prior to the meeting. A motion to that effect was made, seconded, and unanimously approved. Peter then provided a brief financial update. We raised over $30K in 2024, paid our first two instalments on the Finfish/Shellfish study to the Center for Coastal Studies (CCS), and have about $26K in the bank. We will need to pay CCS another $45K to complete the study, so we’ll need to sustain our fundraising momentum into 2025. Peter expressed confidence that by taking advantage of donations, grants, and fundraising events, we will meet our payment obligations.

Peter offered a review of FBH activity in 2024. We distributed an excellent newsletter in early 2024. We would like to continue to send a newsletter at least twice each year. For this purpose, we need persons to write articles, and especially someone to take responsibility for the newsletter. We participated in the cold-stunned turtle survey in early 2024. We held a well-attended event in April where Owen Nichols of CCS described plans for the Finfish/Shellfish study. We helped Mass Audubon with their Horseshoe Crab survey. We kicked off the Finfish/Shellfish study. We participated in water quality testing activity. We published a summer newsletter. We renewed our sponsorship of the Jailhouse Jam series. We held a very successful fundraising cruise aboard the Hyannis Whalewatcher. Mother Nature blessed us again with fine weather! Former President Avery Revere and Owen Nichols represented us at a seminar on preserving our waterways sponsored by the Cape and Islands Realtors. All in all, a busy and productive year!

Peter introduced Jeb Handy, incoming Co-President of FBH. Jeb offered a snapshot of planned 2025 activities. Top priority is completion of the Finfish/Shellfish study. We will involve area students and interested FBH members wherever possible. We will continue to collaborate with Mass Audubon on educational activities. We would love for someone to step up to assume leadership for our newsletter. We will hold speaker events and continue our fundraising. To this end, we will host another sunset cruise at the end of the summer. Because of the popularity of this event, capacity has become an issue. We will look for new and exciting activities as we move forward.

Owen Nichols of CCS provided an update on the Finfish/Shellfish study. He thanked FBH and its leaders for their partnership in protecting Barnstable Harbor. He noted that the partnership extended back to Avery Revere’s Presidency when the Benthic Mapping project began. Owen expressed his commitment to community involvement; he will support this goal to the degree that weather allows. Following a brief review of the benthic mapping results, Owen described the methods being used to survey finfish and shellfish in Barnstable Harbor. CCS has used these same methods for similar projects in Pleasant Bay, Nauset Harbor, and Wellfleet Harbor, allowing for comparison of results across sites. Methods include use of a 50’ beach seine in locations like Millway, Scudders Lane, and the Cottage Colony (Cape Cod Village). Owen shared a slide with red stars marking the beach seine sampling locations. Boat-based dredging and trawling is also being used. He shared a slide with black stars showing the locations for these activities. They let our Shellfish warden and area shellfishermen know when these surveys are occurring to alleviate any justifiable concerns they might have. Finally, CCS is using eel traps in places like Gray’s Beach boardwalk and the Millway Marina dock. Yellow stars mark these locations. Owen reported that the eel trap at Gray’s Beach captured the largest eel he’s ever seen, almost as large as an Anaconda.

Trawling and dredging have turned up a lot of crabs, especially Green Crabs, along with Winter Flounder, Fluke, and other species. Students from both Barnstable High School and AmeriCorps have been involved so far, and CCS has offered talks at Upper Cape Technical School and Cape Cod Academy. Students are participating in real science which is central to the long-term goal of monitoring trends in the Harbor.

Ian Ives, Sanctuary Director for Long Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary, provided an update on the salt marsh restoration efforts described at FBH’s last Annual Meeting. The current major challenge is to obtain the necessary permits, which can take years, slowing down the anticipated interventions. The marsh continues to collapse, and the sea level continues to rise while we seek permits. The good news is that Ian expects the interventions to work once they are implemented. These include filling mosquito ditches and draining some pools. The fifty-acre pilot site is near Mass Audubon’s Barnstable Great Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary. Partners include the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the University of New Hampshire, Bear Creek Wildlife Sanctuary, Narragansett Bay Save the Bay, and Smarteams for Salt Marsh Sparrow protection. Piping plovers, Common terns, Least terns, Eastern Spadefoot toads, Diamond backed terrapins, and Salt Marsh sparrows should all benefit from the planned restoration efforts.

Peter closed the meeting at 7:10. Speaker slides will be made available via the FBH website.