

Friends of Barnstable Harbor
Annual Meeting
29 November 2023
5pm
Discovery Center Conference Room
At Mass Audubon's Long Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary

President Jon Brink called the meeting to order at 5:04pm. He thanked Ian Ives, Sanctuary Director of Mass Audubon's Long Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary, for making the Discovery Center available at no cost to the Friends of Barnstable Harbor (FBH) for our Annual Meeting.

It was moved, seconded, and unanimously agreed to approve the minutes of the 2022 FBH Annual Meeting which had been distributed to membership via email prior to the meeting. Treasurer Colleen Mason reported that FBH has \$30,200 in the bank, up from \$17,000 a year ago. Proceeds from the Harbor Cruise Fundraiser were the primary reason for the increase. It was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved to accept the Treasurer's Report. Ballots and proxies for the vote for Officers and Directors had been gathered with the result being that the slate of Officers and Directors was elected as proposed.

President Brink provided an overview of 2023 FBH accomplishments. He began by thanking Peter Eleftherakis, Vice President, for his many, essential contributions to FBH's mission. He also noted that Avery Revere, Past President, compiled his slide show. The Speaker Series event on Shellfishing in Barnstable Harbor in April filled the conference room at St. Mary's Church and received positive feedback. We decided to pursue a Finned and Shellfish Study in follow up to the Benthic Mapping Study we sponsored. Both studies will provide important baseline data on the status of Barnstable Harbor as we face the unknown challenges imposed by climate change. To raise the money required to conduct the Finned and Shellfish Study (about \$70K), we sponsored the Jailhouse Jam series, to promote awareness of FBH, and organized a Sunset Cruise Fundraiser. President Brink thanked Jack Hill of Hyannis Whale Watch Cruises for providing the boat and crew for the cruise at no cost to FBH, and the many others who supported the very successful cruise event. It sold out, created new friends for FBH, and made significant progress toward the funding required for the Finned and Shellfish Study. Elaborating on the need for such a study, President Brink noted that several fish species ordinarily seen much further south (such as Grey Triggerfish, False Albacore, and Bonito) have been seen in Barnstable Harbor. We need to try to understand these changes. He closed by thanking all who contributed to a good year for FBH.

Regarding plans for 2024, President Brink stated that we would like to re-institute a newsletter. He urged all members to submit material for this purpose. Fundraising will be needed to sponsor the Finned and Shellfish Study; all interested in helping with this essential task are welcome. We will continue our Speaker Series with a talk by Owen Nichols of the Center for Coastal Studies; he will cover both the results of the Benthic Mapping Study as well

as plans for the Finned and Shellfish Study. While no date has been set yet, this will likely occur during the winter. Other possible Speaker Series topics include popular nature apps, such as Merlin Bird ID and Seek, which support Citizen Science, and Horseshoe Crabs. President Brink noted the continuing importance of collaborations with other interested groups such as Mass Audubon, Barnstable Village Association (BVA), and Barnstable Association for Recreational Shellfishing (BARS).

President Brink closed his remarks by stating that we live in a special place and we all have an obligation to help protect it.

President Brink then introduced Ian Ives, Sanctuary Director at Long Pasture, to describe Mass Audubon's exciting salt marsh restoration project. While our marshes may look vast and healthy, they are in fact degraded and failing. Changes made to the marshes in the 1600s by farmers and after World War II, when mosquito ditches were dug, have left the marshes too dry in some places and too wet in others, causing the collapse of the marsh. The entire marsh area is compromised.

Because of drastic declines in the populations of several federally endangered species residing in Barnstable Harbor, Mass Audubon and its partners were able to secure a \$145K grant to conduct a pilot study for restoration of Barnstable's Great Marshes. Endangered species living in the area include Saltmarsh Sparrow, Piping Plover, Common Tern, Least Tern, Diamondback Terrapin, and Eastern Spadefoot Toad. Mass Audubon's partners for this project include the US Fish and Wildlife Service, University of New Hampshire's Coastal Habitat Restoration Team, Bearcreek Wildlife Sanctuary, Narragansett Bay's Save the Bay, and SMARTeam's Saltmarsh Sparrow Initiative. These partners all have essential, successful experience in saltmarsh restoration, making collaboration highly desirable. Barnstable Harbor is an Area of Critical Environmental Concern with at least 3,300 years of geologic history, 3,840 acres of saltmarsh (including Scorton Creek), and 9,125 acres of total system acreage.

The team's approach to salt marsh restoration will begin with a 75-acre test plot close to Mass Audubon's Barnstable Great Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary. The team plans to fill the mosquito ditches with vegetation cut from adjacent marshland and drain the megapools with runnels or channels. If the test goes well, Mass Audubon and its partners plan to apply for funding to expand the restorative efforts to the entire marsh. Permitting for such a large project can take as long as four years, and sea level rise places time pressure upon us and our endangered species to complete the restoration before our endangered species disappear. Director Ives noted that sea level has risen in Barnstable Harbor by 11" since 1922.

President Brink closed the meeting at 6:12pm with thanks to Director Ives for his interesting and informative presentation, and to everyone for attending.