

Down East RC&D

Meeting

April 24 2014

Present:

Nate Pennell, Machias, (WCSWCD)
Gary Edwards, Sullivan (MSA)
Kathy Upton (Cherryfield Library)
Kathryn Lewis, (Eastport)
Kathy Upton, (Cherryfield Library)
Peter Steenstra (Orland)

Barbara Tibbetts (WCSWCD)
Fred Cook (DART)
Jennifer Peters (SCEC)
Crystal Hitchings (WCCOG)
Jolene Stanley, Sullivan
Orissa Sargent, Sullivan
Betsy Fitzgerald (on phone)

Secretary's notes were approved.

Treasurer's report: We are getting to the point where we have to find funds or fold. We have already agreed that we can charge five percent of our projects and Gary has contacted many of them. Cobscook has tentatively agreed to pay their \$800 and the others have not yet been heard from.

Jen noted that SCEC's auditor, who happens to be our auditor, warned them that they must charge the same fees across the board. Motion Fred, second Jen to approve the treasurer's report.

GeoLab is now Geo Fair, and has been altered. Had things gone as originally proposed, we might have joined and had hope to prosper. It was formed out of North Country NH RC&D and developed with an opportunity to get in on the ground floor of crowd sourcing but required 20 RC&Ds across the country to join. To date there are only five. The latest version doesn't bring in the expertise but is setting up a GeoFair in October with up to 20 spots available to members. The fair is an international exhibition of projects online that may attract sponsors. But to get our \$5000 back we'd have to put out 25 projects because each costs \$250. To make any money we'd have to charge \$295. If we could get some partners it might make some sense but then who will do the work? Because of the uncertainty of how many will join in and how much can be made off it, we really can't buy in just now. There was some discussion about this. Could we go in for individual spots? If so, shouldn't they be the "sexy," more tangible types like Cherryfield Academy and Whitneyville Library. Motion Jen, second Crystal, that we pass for now by try to keep involved.

President's report/updates: The New England association meeting was held by phone April 23. Half of the RC&D areas are gone or non functioning. Maine still has all its Councils but Heart of Maine and St. John Aroostock are hanging by threads. There is one left in New Hampshire, Vermont and Massachusetts have folded and Connecticut is blending its two. The National conference will be in Mobile Alabama in June. Things aren't looking much better on that level. Andy Gordon heads it, with an office in California but he's keeping up with what he can in DC. Most grants these days seem to be coming from the private sector.

Julio Society: Nate was able to speak to Dave Libby and he will be satisfied with what we decide. Currently we have about \$10,000 in the account. Requests have really dwindled. We did get one last year but there have been years when there were none. The options of what to do with it are to disband and work with other organizations, or try to marry it with the University of Maine system for environmental studies. UMM does marine studies, forestry would have to go elsewhere in the system. Fred suggested we also explore the trades.

At this point Jolene read a poem about last Gary's leaving to attend the fall conference.

Projects: The Food Alliance recently met in Whitneyville with only five of the members attending but this is a busy season. They are still working on a logo and setting up two Facebook pages - one for members and one for the public.

Cherryfield Academy has finished its basement and is pleased to find the floor flattened down. The Easter egg hunt was a huge success, with about 200 children in attendance. There are now contra dances. The building is now known as the Cherryfield Academy Community Center.

Destination Cherryfield met April 23 and hired Shelby Green. This will be a three day event and already there are several people committed to being there.

Sumner CSO is waiting for a grant.

Happy Grant: Two of their participants recently graduated from the Washington County Leadership Institute.
Sullian/Sorrento: Plans for painting the building and a drive for getting the inside done are in progress.

What's next in depth discussion: A phone connection with Betsy Fitzgerald was made.

Gary stated bluntly we cannot continue in this way, relying on things we have no control over. To make it more complicated, DART is also exploring its options. The biggest expense we have, and we share it with DART, is the rent. If DART goes away we'll have to pay it all. They had a board meeting last week and we want to be in any future meetings that concern us.

Our options include Fickett's offer of a cheaper (but not much cheaper) space. 12 years ago there was also a crisis and we used Cherryfield Academy. Obviously, things have changed in that building, but there may be a small space and then we'd have to find storage.

Betsy suggested we look into forming a partnership with the Washington County Development Authority and/or possible other partners.

Delta Corp. owns a building in Harrington that is very well insulated but is hollow on the inside. It could be made into office space and the mortgage is less than the \$550 we pay a month for rent. She volunteered to talk to Delta. It was thought that we might also rent space to some other organization. Jen also suggested Mano e Mano's building in Milbrige. Their conference room doesn't require monthly rent.

It's been three years since we lost funding and still we're the most active RC&D in Maine.

Our major source of income is from Washington County. They give us \$4000 a year and we have to justify what we do. Betsy said we should justify more.

Jen said NMDC has a potential grant for logging and forestry training in Washington and Aroostook Counties that we might get in on. We need to change our model to provide services for a fee and get staff to work on getting revenue sources. Perhaps we should consider charging more than five percent.

Some RC&Ds have cut back on meetings but it was agreed that's not a good idea.

Fred stated that DART is in a condition of uncertainty. The state is talking about cutting the regions down from eight to two and if that happens DART will likely have its office in Portland. It is considering using the Ellsworth Chamber of Commerce as a visitor center - everything is up in the air. Barbara Maurer is finishing her work. She was originally hired by both DE RC&D and DART with 20 hours each but we had to let her go when we lost funding. DART has been carrying her for 20 hours but she does far more than that.

Getting back to the Development Authority, Betsy noted it is a quasi municipal entity and as such has access to funding we don't and we have some access they don't. It was formed when the Navy moved out of Cutler but it is to promote development all over Washington County and our partnering with them would expand their reach. We have healthy viable projects but not enough time or money to do them justice.

How do you get Hancock County on board? They haven't contributed in years, but benefit from some of our best projects.

Meeting adjourned 12:05 pm.