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1. Establish a quorum (5 members minimum)

2. Review and Accept Minutes of March 2020 meeting

3. Public comments

4. Chairman’s Remarks to the Board

5. Executive Director’s April Report - Q & A

6. COVID-19 Matters

7. Virtual Programming Update

8. Confirm/establish meeting dates:
   a. May 2020 TBD
   b. June 2020 TBD

9. Adjourn

Note: This meeting is being conducted using Zoom Video Communications, which is permissible under Governor Lamont’s waiver on open meeting requirements.
Project O On-line ZOOM Board of Directors Meeting - March 26, 2020

Attending Members: Nick Spera (ISAAC), Kathy Howard (MSMHS), Ev Brown (Bozrah), Jason England (Groton), Stephanie Jones (NFA), Mike O’Connor (Waterford), Nat Trumbull (UConn).
Representing Project O-Jim McCauley (Exec.Director).
Public: 7 Project O staff members: Molly Jacobs, Lisa Colon, Deb Sayer, Kyle Swan, Lesley de Labry, Emily de Labry & Callie Scheetz.

Meeting was opened at 10:05AM by Chairman Spera.
1. Quorum was established.
2. Minutes of 2/11/20 were reviewed and a motion was made to accept them (O’Connor/England). Unanimous.
3. Public comment: none at this time.
4. Chairman’s remarks: Priority now is dealing with impact of Covid-19 and the budget, programming, staff etc implications. Currently the delay is until April 20 but probably longer. However, the remote Project O potential, including the Facebook trial this morning, is awesome.
5. Executive Director’s monthly report Q & A for March was sent in a prior email. Refer to the report handout for details.
   a. One important item from that report that needed action was the motion to authorize Jim to file the upcoming state RFP paperwork. Motion was made: To authorize the Executive Director to file an application for interdistrict grant funding for and on behalf of Project Oceanology in response to CSDE RFP #001 and to act as the authorized representative of Project Oceanology. (O’Connor/England) Unanimous.
   (Discussion of the chairman’s voting & motioning rights.)
   b. Work status update: Jim reported that all Project O staff are well. They are working in a combination of at home & on site and will probably meet together on Zoom weekly. The financial impact assessment is continuing and the staff is producing a variety of online materials that Molly will describe later. First priority is the member & CRC commitments and the grant money that must be spent on programs or returned. Budget adjustment deadlines are currently in April, documentation and approvals for program changes will be needed.
   c. Financial Impact update: Jim presented Budget Impact Worksheet 3/26/20 for review and highlighted the major impacts as projected now. Options for refunding, deferral to 2021 budget or substituting access to or delivery of online materials in lieu of those options were all discussed. Leslie & Brandy are fielding daily emails regarding programming. Summer camp was not considered yet...optimistically looking forward to those happening as planned. Some of the PODS & BWET grant work projects can continue for example the development of the Project O database and AV improvements to the cafeteria & classrooms. No member schools have asked for refunds to date. These projections indicate a net loss of about 54K for the year which can be covered by
currently held assets. A question was asked about the various state & federal bailout avenues to use for making up lost funds. Jim & Lisa have been following that information, an 880 page packet on the federal programs possible was referenced. It’s still a gray area, as is the status of the Project and its eligibility. Clarification on many points is still needed and time will tell if these will be beneficial to us. The low interest loan options are also a possibility.

6. **Programming Progress Update:** Molly reported on the plans and efforts of the educators. Four types of projects are underway: A) Facebook Live (this morning was the first rollout). Planned several times a week. B) Virtual Field trips for members & CRC schools which are then connected to data sets & activities for teacher & student use. SEINING will be available today and the Seal Watch trip is close to completion. Intro to Oceans, Gulls & others will follow. C & D) Frank Colmenares from ISAAC has helped video material for Creature Features (story & guess the critter format geared for elementary students) and Science Notebook Features (detailed natural history of critters with sketching and discussion on the organisms for older students.)

7. **Legislative Connections Update:** Jim has emailed Rep. Osten, Somers & Formica regarding the impact to our program and availability of loan options and other assistance. Molly contacted Rep Courtney and several others from her DC work about Project O’s eligibility for assistance given our unique position as a nonprofit working so closely with school systems and not ticket sales so the needs are very different. Plans include joint letters to government representatives. Jim will participate in the Governor’s conference call tomorrow with nonprofits.

8. Next meeting is: *4/21/20, time to be determined.*

9. **Motion to adjourn at 10:53AM. (O’Connor/England). Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,
Evelyn Brown, sec.
To: Board of Directors, Project Oceanology  
From: Jim McCauley, Executive Director  
Date: April 21, 2020  
Subject: Executive Director’s Report

1. Budget/Finance
   a. Submitted CARES Act loan application on April 7 for ~$135k under Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) through Chelsea Groton Bank. Notified on April 10 that it would be submitted for formal review and approval; notified April 16 that the loan was on hold pending additional federal funding; sent emails to Senator Murphy, Senator Blumenthal, Congressman Courtney, and State Senators Formica, Osten, and Somers urging their support. If approved and funded, Project O expects to be able to meet the requirements of the PPP that will allow the loan to be forgivable (it would become a grant). Following an April 2 Zoom meeting with Congressman Courtney hosted by the Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce, the Congressman’s staff was instrumental in verifying Project O eligibility for the PPP to allow our application to be submitted; the SBA website did not address the eligibility of Project O as a public charity organization, but his staff was able to get direct confirmation from the SBA the next day.
   b. Submitted Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) application on April 7 for $10k through SBA and Chelsea Groton Bank; the EIDL is forgivable up to $10k.
   c. Merrill Lynch portfolio summary of all accounts:
      | Date     | Balance |
      |----------|---------|
      | 2.12.2020 | 493,105 |
      | 4.16.2020 | 424,198 |
   d. Anticipate need to withdraw ~$40k from ML CD in the coming days.
   e. FY21 budget preparation will be an agenda item at the May Board of Directors meeting; revision of BWET and interdistrict grants are pending, as is development of the FY21 interdistrict grant.

2. Grant activities/update
   a. CFECT Environmental Grant - notified that our application for a $41.6k grant to partner with CT Audubon Society to deliver 4 teacher PLEs during the 2020-2021 school year remains under consideration as CFECT reviews grant priorities.
   b. CFECT Norwich Youth Grant - notified that application for $10.9k to provide Seventh Grade at Sea program involving vessel and school visit programs during 2020-2021 school year remains under consideration as CFECT reviews grant priorities.
   c. 21st CCLC Grant - application for $71k grant over two years to partner with Norwich Public Schools for teacher workshops and after school programs as part of the NOAA and NAAEE-21st CCLC Watershed STEM Education Partnership Grant program was not selected for funding; due to the uncertainty around the COVID-19 health crisis, the award process is being extended and our grant may be considered again based on available resources; we will be notified by August 1 if funds become available.
   d. Eversource Grant - received approval of our $2.5k grant application to Eversource to support our new Undersea Technology Camp; funding will support both up-front costs of Sea Perch ROV kits/tools and financial assistance to campers.
   e. CSDE FY20 Interdistrict Grants - guidance from CSDE encouraged delivery of enrichment programming that reduces isolation as an alternative to face-to-face interactions; budget adjustments must be submitted for approval by April 30 and final reports due June 30.
f. CSDE FY21 Interdistrict Grants - CSDE extended the application deadline to April 27 and clarified that Project O may include indirect costs in the budget in a similar manner as past years; anticipate our FY21 CRC program to be structured similarly to FY20 for $463k.

3. School Year Programs
   a. Per the Governor’s Executive Order, schools are closed until at least May 20; Project O has cancelled all school visits through May 20 for on-site programs and continues to develop material in our virtual library to support teachers and students.
   b. Subscribers and non-members whose programs have or are expected to be cancelled this spring have been contacted regarding deferring fees already paid to the next school year or receiving a partial refund. Each email is being tailored to the specific circumstances of the school (amount of payment received); a few have replied, but it’s too early to forecast how much of up to ~$100k will be deferred and/or refunded.

4. Public Programs
   a. All seal watch and birding trips originally scheduled from late March to early May have been cancelled; refunds or rebooking opportunities have been offered.
   b. Marine Science Day activities on May 13 have been cancelled; refunds are being offered, or paid participants have been offered an option to donate the fees already paid.
   c. Oceanographic and Sunset Cruise tickets (July/August) are online; few tickets have sold.

5. Summer Camps
   a. Camp registration remains open, however very few new registrations have been received.
   b. Two staff members participated in the April 15 Connecticut Camping Association (CCA) virtual meeting with CT OEC representatives; although OEC’s focus recently has been on day care issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, they expect to shift to summer camp issues in the coming weeks. If camps are permitted to open, changes related to the health and safety of campers might include limits on the size of any group of campers (enrollments) and requirements for assessing body temperature, physical distancing, face masks, hand sanitizing, etc. The availability of supplies (PPE, sanitizing materials, etc) may be an issue. CCA virtual meetings are planned to be held bi-weekly.
   c. Parents with children registered have been notified that if necessary to cancel summer camp for health and safety reasons, we will let them know immediately. If cancelled, parents may elect to defer tuition already paid to 2021 camps, to donate all or part of tuition paid, or receive a full refund. Approximately $110k of revenues for camps has been received to date.
   d. Registrations as of April 16 include 6-OEA(+0 this month), 62-Ocean Camp (+9), 13-Marine Science Research Experience (+3), 1-Undersea Tech (+1).
   e. Mystic Seaport Joint - registration is open on Project O website, 3 registrants (+0).
   f. Mystic Aquarium Joint – registration is open on Mystic Aquarium’s website.
   g. NESS Joint - formal agreement has been put in place, registration is open, 3 registrants (+0).
   h. The Project O Summer Camp Open House scheduled for April 18 has been cancelled.

6. Staff
   a. Project O staff members remain healthy and have not reported any signs of illness. FT and some PT staff continue work predominantly from home with visits to the facilities as necessary to monitor equipment and vessels, develop material for the virtual library, and perform other essential functions to be prepared to resume normal operations when conditions permit. Weekly Zoom staff meetings are being held to facilitate communication.
   b. Prospective summer interns (4) have been notified that changes to camp operations are expected but not finalized. The start and move-in dates for the recently hired marine educator/resident supervisor has been postponed.
7. Administration/Logistics
   a. Limited maintenance activities on research vessels and skiffs are being conducted.
   b. The project to install media equipment in the cafeteria and classroom is on hold pending approval of CSDE grant budget modifications.
   c. Released the RFP for development of Project Oceanology Data System (PODS), which is envisioned to enable students to record science/environmental data collected during programs via tablet for uploading into the Long Island Sound Integrated Coastal Observing System (LISICOS) database. Funding for the project is included in the NOAA BWET grant. Proposals are due April 30.
   d. To reduce expenses, some normal services have been temporarily reduced (telephone, data-enabled tablets, etc) to reduce costs; further reductions will be made as appropriate.

8. Outreach
   a. The March 27 call for non-profit directors with Governor Lamont was cancelled due to technical difficulties.
   b. Participated in an April 2 Zoom meeting hosted by Chamber of Commerce with Congressman Courtney (as described in paragraph 1a).
   c. Participated in an April 8 webinar hosted by Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce with the CT Department of Labor covering unemployment insurance, paid sick leave, SharedWork, and other DOL programs.
   d. Participated in an April 9 webinar hosted by Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce with Suisman Shapiro attorneys and Chelsea Groton Bank reps covering CARES Act PPP, unemployment compensation enhancements, and other related topics.
   e. Project O education staff will be providing a series of virtual Earth Week activities during the week of April 20 (Zoom meeting, live FaceBook broadcasts, and a beach cleanup challenge).
   f. Project O is submitting a proposal to the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation in Silver Spring, MD for creation of ocean exploration education resource materials for educators that will be hosted on the NMFS website. If the proposal is selected, Dr. Jacobs and her education staff will begin work in May with contract completion required by April 2021; work could be accelerated for completion by September 2020 if summer camp schedules are severely reduced.

9. Board Administration
   a. Board Meeting Dates for Remainder of FY20.
      Dates and times for the board meetings have not been established. Review of member school calendars indicates many potential conflicts in June if our board meeting isn’t held in the first week. Recommend the May board meeting be held during the week of May 11 and the June meeting be held in the week of June 1, which spaces them 3 weeks apart. Board members will receive a doodle poll and are requested to complete the poll prior to the April 21 meeting so that dates/times can be selected to assure a quorum and maximum participation.
   b. Revision to Interdistrict Committee Agreement and Bylaws.
      All 11 member school districts have indicated plans to remain members under the newly proposed cooperative agreement and bylaws. Our attorney at Shipman and Goodwin is reviewing our ability to obtain digital signatures from Superintendents/Heads; if permitted by law, digital signatures will be requested from each of the 11 school districts and the attorney will file the new documents with CSDE. The goal is to have the documents filed and effective prior to the June board meeting.
   c. Elections.
      The new bylaws require officers to be elected prior to July 1 each year.