Project Oceanology
Board of Directors Meeting
June 18, 2020 12:00pm

Public Participation is Invited

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Meeting ID: 835 5855 2626
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1. Establish a quorum (5 members minimum)
2. Review and Accept Minutes of May meeting
3. Public comments
4. Chairman’s Remarks to the Board
5. Executive Director’s May Report - Q & A
6. Executive Session for personnel matters
7. Election of Officers
8. Confirm/establish meeting dates:
   a. September 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 - May 28, 2020

Attending members: Nick Spera (board chair, ISAAC), Suzanne Scorza (Sprague), Stephani Jones (NFA), Jason England (Groton), Mike O’Connor (Waterford), Kathy Howard (MSMHS)

Representing Project O: Jim McCauley (Exec. Director), Molly Jacobs (curriculum director)

Public: Lisa Colon (Project O staff), Lesley deLabry (Project O staff)

Meeting started at 12:02 pm by Jim McCauley & Chairman Nick Spera

1. Quorum established
2. Minutes of April 21 meeting reviewed; motion to accept (England/O’Connor). Unanimous.
3. Minutes of May 1 emergency meeting reviewed; motion to accept (O’Connor/England). Unanimous.
4. Public comments = none
5. Chairman’s remarks
   • Fall start – all up in the air for both schools and for Project O
   • Executive committee votes – ISAAC not returning as a member therefore Dr. Spera not eligible... interested parties re: board president welcome to talk to him and Jim about the role
6. Executive Director’s report (sent in prior email and presented on screen share during meeting; reference written document for details). Particular topics discussed:
   • Expecting additional withdrawal from Merrill Lynch funds for overhead and operational expenses, per report
   • Grant updates esp. supporting essential workers/ students impacted – revising forms and website to clarify financial support opportunities available to students and families
   • Additional refunds for compromised spring and summer programs expected but trying to direct users to the on-line education opportunities which continue to develop and expand
   • Expect ~100K undelivered programs for spring/summer; possibly deferred to next year (vs. refund)
7. For continued discussion at June meeting date-
   • 5 superintendent signatures on new by-laws/6 still outstanding
   • Question re: response to queries from districts if programs are unable to be used next year
     Jim described two queries received. Ex: Bozrah “commitment, responsibility to Project O if budget needs to be flexed”; superintendent relatively new to Bozrah (per conversation with Ev Brown – believes no longer a concern); East Lyme question re: invoice timing and flexibility relative to decisions as fall semester school openings are decided...
   • Ultimately = determinations will be necessary on how/what programs are going to be able to be delivered based on recommended safety protocols
   • Based on other revenues/programs that can be delivered to non-member schools and other entities, adjustments on staffing requirements may be necessary.
   • Individual district standards may differ from state standards – additional challenges to program delivery on per case basis!
8. Annual elections for officers = chairman, treasurer, secretary; Ev Brown (unavailable for meeting today) interested in continuing as secretary if appropriate

9. Interdistrict Committee Agreement & Bylaws - Shipman/Goodman is collecting all e-signatures and will file new documents with CSDE; prior to goal is to file prior to the June meeting.
   - Discussion re: current non-voting members due to not being traditional districts but are current members esp. MSMHS, NL Science and Tech, UConn; suggest inviting these entities to be added as voting members as “member organizations”
   - Conversation re: difference between “district” level membership which spreads the resource across all of the grades (4-12) vs. magnet school style membership which is more specialized to a particular grade range e.g. 9-12.
   - Question re: protocols = some board members were uneasy about allowing proposed member organization representatives to vote on whether or not they can become an official voting member under the new organization and whether it would be legal or proper. Discussion included comparisons between full districts vs. single school and whether it could become a positive to actually increase engagement of other school with the “organizations” district e.g. expanding from MSMHS to eligible schools in the LEARN “district”
   - Jim was asked to clarify how district membership costs are determined. Answer = costs and specific number/type of programs are proportionate to student population for grades 5-12; therefore, should be “equal” program distribution between large and small district
   - Suggestion was made for Project O board is representatives from member districts may want to discuss admittance of member organizations with their superintendents and receive input.
   - Jim was requested to forward proposed motion so representatives can have clear and consistent conversations with superintendents. Need more representation from the members to be confident that we are following the membership’s interests
   - Jim suggests: delay filing of signed by-law paperwork until this is resolved; specifically: to require member organizations be making same level of commitment as member districts such as the one year withdrawal requirement like there is for the districts.
   - Cautionary note = if there was no one year withdrawal requirement the member organizations would have similar voting rights as member districts without the same level of commitment.
   - There was discussion about seeking involvement of the entire LEARN RESC as a member district instead of the MSMHS as a LEARN member organization as well as the entire New London District as a member district instead of the NLSTMHS as a member organization.
   - Interest in advantaging a variety of other types of schools like private, colleges/universities, charter schools
   - The board agreed that Jim should allow Shipman & Goodwin to file the documents with CSDE when signatures were obtained and the board members present at the June meeting could file a motion at the outset of the meeting regarding the acceptance of member organizations.

10. Program review (Molly Jacobs):
   - live vs. virtual options for fall programming – board members were encouraged to review content that has been developed this spring; consider synchronous google meets options
as tested with East Lyme!: specific/targeted programs for particular content; instructor “invites” for guest speaking opportunities; expanding the customization to schools/classrooms
• Summer programming discussion included:
  i. Safety/security preparations for camps and potential school programs – PPE, social distancing, busing, boat restrictions.
  ii. Shore programs may be easier to accommodate but would still be difficult to manage to ensure socially appropriate contact
• Busing issues are likely to be a major bottleneck, no matter what!
11. FY21 Budget proposal was reviewed:
  • Anticipate significant reductions in subscriber, public, and single program revenues in the fall and possibly into the spring season.
  • Overnight program revenues are expected to be reduced; 2/3 are normally in spring, with 0 income until then.
  • Community Foundation, Eversource, Bowdenwein grant funding still expected
  • Donations – FY20 projection was highly optimistic; FY21 reduced
  • Expenses outlined in document – possibly some flexibility in the fuel budget but not much
  • Not expecting to spend as much on vessel maintenance
  • Overhead lease and insurance expenses = standard and expected increases
  • CRC and BWet grants help offset some of the overhead expenses
  • Equipment replacement of vehicle (Dodge truck)
  • Equipment replacement of digital equipment (laptops vs. chrome books)
  • Efforts continue to deliver these grant responsibilities without the face to face contact
  • Adjustments to executive director contract (FTE=0.8) per expected reduction in revenues
  • Future staffing adjustments will depend in part on grant renewals
  • PPP – not all employees were able to return; expect to be able to meet requirements although the loan expectations are constantly changing
  • Motion to approve FY21 budget as proposed (O’Connor, Scorza); unanimous approval.
  Proposed meeting date = June 18
12. June meeting date set for June 18.
13. Motion to adjourn ~1:14 pm (Scorza; O’Connor)
To: Board of Directors, Project Oceanology  
From: Jim McCauley, Executive Director  
Date: June 18, 2020  
Subject: Executive Director’s Report

1. Budget/Finance
   a. The Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act (PPPFA) became law on May 28 and provides new flexibility to PPP loans including extending the loan forgiveness period from 8 weeks to 24 weeks; this is expected to help ensure Project O’s loan will be fully forgivable.
   b. Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) grant from SBA has been fully processed; $10k received is expected to be fully forgivable; an additional $150k is available at 2.75% (plus nominal fees); further funds will be requested if necessary and approved by the board.
   c. Submitted revised BWET budget and request for extension to a 4th year.
   d. Merrill Lynch portfolio summary of all accounts (note $40k was withdrawn in April):
      
      | Date       | Balance   |
      |------------|-----------|
      | 2.12.2020  | 493,105   |
      | 4.16.2020  | 424,198   |
      | 5.12.2020  | 393,475   |
      | 6.12.2020  | 409,385   |
      (withdrew $40k from CD 4.23.2020)
      
   e. Anticipate withdrawing funds from the remaining $40k CD at ML in late June.
   f. Processed ~$37k in refunds for camps and public cruises since mid-March.

2. Grant activities/update
   a. CSDE FY21 Interdistrict Grants - application for $463,479 for Connecticut Rivers Connection program is pending w/CSDE; anticipate notification of award level in July following approval of CT FY21 budget (specifically the IDCG line item).
   b. Nordson Corporation Foundation - met with Nordson reps to discuss our pending application for $9,250 to support school year programs for alliance district schools in Windham County.
   c. Expended 100% of grants (~$13k) from CFECT, Bodenwein Benevolent Foundation, and Eversource to provide tuition assistance to more than 40 campers from families of essential workers and families financially impacted by COVID-19 or other hardships.

3. School Year Programs
   a. School year programs include 2 live virtual programs for member schools this week.
   b. Due to the uncertainty in COVID-related restrictions on school groups and bussing in the fall, the Project O education staff has developed a series of flexible programs to accommodate a range of conditions schools and teachers may experience. Please refer to the programs outreach pdf forwarded with this report.

4. Public Programs
   a. Cancelled weekday public programs during summer camp weeks.
   b. Assessing ability to staff weekend public programs from mid-July into September.

5. Summer Camps
   a. Target enrollment for day camps is 75% capacity or 180 campers; current enrollment is 122.
   b. Target enrollment for virtual camps is 50% capacity or 72 campers; current enrollment is 33.
   c. Actual registrations as of June 15 include:
      i. Ocean Day Camp 59 (+44 since May 26)
      ii. Research Experience Day Camp 18 (+10)
      iii. Ocean Explorer Academy 30 (+23)
      iv. Undersea Tech Day Camp 15 (+13)
      v. Research Experience at Home 17 (+14)
vi. Explorer Academy at Home 16 (+9)

6. Staff
   a. Resident Supervisor and PT Educator - welcomed Kim Ohnemus aboard in late May.
   b. Interns - two interns have been offered the opportunity to support virtual camps.

7. Administration/Logistics
   a. The Employee Handbook indicates that FT employees may carry over up to forty (40) hours
      of vacation from one fiscal year to the next; the carryover date will be extended to August 31
      this year due to recent restrictions on travel and travel planning.
   b. Liability and workman’s comp insurance policies will renew July 1; despite reductions to
      camper numbers, vessel operations, etc. a ~4% increase is anticipated to ~$47k.
   c. Initiated renewal process for health and dental insurance rates effective September 1.
   d. Project Oceanology Data System (PODS) contract is expected to be formalized this month
      with UConn’s Connecticut Institute for Resilience & Climate Adaptation (CIRCA); PODS is
      expected to be fully funded through the BWET grant.

8. Outreach
   a. Sent emails to State Senators Formica, Osten, and Somers urging their support to ensure the
      Interdistrict Cooperation line item was funded in the FY21 state budget.
   b. Reached out to Quinn & Hary Marketing (New London) to inquire about Ørsted’s
      community partnership plans and MOU intentions; $950k had been planned last year.
   c. Dr. Jacobs was interviewed by a Reefs.com representative leading to an online article

9. Board Administration
   a. Board Meeting Dates for FY21
      The September meeting date should be established at this meeting; since the Governor’s
      Executive Order permitting public meetings to be held remotely may no longer be in effect,
      recommend setting a date and time for a meeting held at Project O; if still permitted by
      Executive Order, board members will also be allowed to participate remotely.
   b. Revision to Interdistrict Committee Agreement and Bylaws
      i. Shipman & Goodwin has received 9 of 11 member school district superintendent
         signatures on the new Agreement and Bylaws.
      ii. Based on our attorney’s advice, Project O has contacted our PPP Lender (Chelsea
          Groton Bank) for approval to file the new documents with CSDE, which could
          technically be considered a change in ownership requiring Lender permission.
      iii. Upon receipt of all signatures and approval of the PPP Lender, the documents will be
           filed with CSDE; board members and superintendents will be notified.
   c. Elections
      Election of Officers is a separate agenda item. The current Bylaws of Project Oceanology
      state that the following officers of the Assembly shall be elected at the July meeting of each
      year, to take office at such meeting for a term of (1) year:
         i. A chairman shall preside over all regular and special meetings of the Assembly, shall
            call special meetings at his/her own discretion or upon petition, as set forth above,
            and shall be empowered to cancel or postpone regular meetings, as set forth above,
            and shall appoint the membership of subcommittees.
         ii. The treasurer is entrusted with the receipt, care, and disbursement of funds, and shall
             preside at meetings in the absence of the chairman.
         iii. The secretary shall be responsible for maintaining the minutes and records of the
              Assembly, sending all notices and handling all correspondence.
Project O Member Programs: 2020-2021

Project Oceanology understands that schools are facing a lot of uncertainty for the 2020-2021 school year - that's why our programs are flexible. Learn how we can support your science curriculum – whether you end up delivering it in person or remotely! We have designed a range of options to accommodate the range of conditions schools and teachers may experience in 2020-2021.

During the spring 2020 quarantine period, several member schools took advantage of our remote learning resources to greatly expand the reach of Project O programming to grade levels and students that wouldn’t normally be able to participate. We encourage all of our member schools to take advantage of these resources, particularly if learning is fully or partly remote for some grade levels in 2020-2021.

**Live, In-Person Programming**
This is still our favorite way to teach! If health and safety rules permit, Project O will be delighted to welcome you and your students aboard our research vessels, on the shore, or into our labs. We can also come to your classroom! Research vessels, labs, all equipment, and shared facilities such as bathrooms are thoroughly sanitized between groups, and Project O educators wear masks and maintain strict sanitary procedures at all times. Many programs can be delivered entirely outdoors. We will work with you to ensure that your experience with us meets social distancing requirements set by your school; contact us to discuss details.

**Live Online Programming for the Classroom**
If you can’t visit Long Island Sound, we’ll bring Long Island Sound to your classroom! If school is in session but field trips and outside visitors are not allowed, we can drop off scientific gear, samples, and more at your school. Gear will be thoroughly sanitized ahead of time, and drop-off can be arranged in advance so that it can sit untouched for several days before use. During your classes, the Project O instructor will lead the activity live on screen via the virtual platform of your choice, with in-person assistance from the teacher. Some programs may require the teacher to complete a brief virtual training session ahead of time; others do not.

**Live Online Programming for Remote Learning**
If you can’t visit Long Island Sound or your classroom, we’ll bring Long Island Sound to your homes! We'll go live from our research vessel or from the shore with you and your students. Students will meet marine animals and help collect scientific data as we use oceanographic gear to sample physical and biological parts of Long Island Sound. The program will be custom-designed to meet your needs.
“Marissa and the rest of the staff worked closely with us to create a program that was personalized to our needs... The educators during the trip kept my students engaged by sending a data sheet in advance so that my students could record as if they were on the boat, asking them questions, and of course by teaching them about each of the organisms we caught in the lobster trap and plankton net. The virtual boat program was the ‘next best thing’ to actually being on the Envirolab II and in the end, my students learned the same information as if they were actually there! We love Project O and quarantine wasn’t stopping us from attending!”

- Kim Picard, 7th grade, Watkinson School

Virtual Field Trips
In these activities designed for remote learning, students are immersed in a marine habitat through google earth tours, videos, and interactive photos and descriptions. They are then presented with a series of research questions – teachers can assign specific questions, or leave students to choose. Research questions range from basic (designed for early middle school) to advanced (upper high school). For the chosen research question, students will be provided with a range of background information, and a dataset collected by previous student participants at Project O. Students will analyze their data, use their results to make a claim backed up by evidence that answers their research question, and then share with their teacher and classmates.

Custom Video Content
We will work with teachers to design custom video content for their classroom! Examples so far have included a Q&A with our full-time captain with questions about boats and weather submitted by kindergarten students; video footage of diverse fish swimming behaviors for a high school lesson on comparative morphology; an inside tour of Ledge Light lighthouse for a fifth grade class studying maritime history; a lesson on boat safety and navigation for high school students; a geology walk and talk on Bluff Point for seventh grade; and a squid dissection for fourth grade.

“Project O was able to take my priority concepts and produce virtual activities that I could share with students and their families... The gull nesting behaviors video had several sequences where it almost seemed as if you were there with the birds! Added perks were the follow-up craft, worksheet, or discussion questions that accompany each title. Several of my 5th grade and 6th grade parents took the time to email back that they had really enjoyed the programs.

- Evelyn Brown, Middle School Science, Fields Memorial School, Bozrah, CT
**Creature Features**  
In this video series aimed at younger audiences, we introduce a marine animal, read a story book, and then meet the critter up close. Support materials are available to accompany these lessons including a response to literature graphic organizer (fiction, nonfiction, or poem) and a related STEAM activity.

“Distance learning is so difficult for 5 year olds developmentally. I had parents telling me that their children loved the [Creature Features] that you created. Some of my children watched it four times. Thank you for providing this for us!”  
- Debbie West, Kindergarten Teacher, Catherine Kolnaski Magnet Elementary School, Groton CT

“My students are head over heels for creature features!”  
- Teacher from Northeast Academy Elementary, Groton CT

**Science Notebooks**  
In this video series, we take a deep dive into the biology of local organisms through guided science notebook entries. We’ll introduce animals and then draw them, labelling important features and making notes.

“Love your hermit crab lesson! Awesome job. Paula and I will be using it with our classes.”  
- Eva Girard, 6th Grade Teacher, West Side Middle School, Groton CT

**Project O Facebook Live Videos**  
This video series was originally broadcast live on Facebook, and is now available in our resource library along with supplemental curriculum materials.

“Thank you so much. That was an awesome Facebook live video on tongs and bivalves. YouTube videos work great for sharing with my students during this time of distance learning. Thank you again – you guys are AWESOME!”  
- Kimberly Ann Alzak, Rockville High School