

DOWN EAST COUNCIL MINUTES

DATE: April 13, 2015

CALL TO ORDER: DEC meeting came to order at 7pm, Davis VFD.

IN ATTENDANCE: Lillie Miller (Straits), Barbara Blake (Gloucester), Richard Lowdermilk (Atlantic), Art Noyes (Atlantic), Dave Boileau (Atlantic), Nancy Lewis (Davis), James Morris (Straits), Janie Jones (Tusk),

WELCOME: The meeting was called to order. Lillie introduced guest speaker Jay Styron, who gave a presentation on oyster aquaculture. Jay is from Cedar Island, said oyster market won't crash like clams because clams are a bushel commodity. 75 percent oysters imported to NC. Oyster aquaculture opportunity for people to continue working on water (fish houses closing, etc) – fishermen have know-how and skill. What can this do for DE? Help CF and economic development – 1. Jobs. This is decent money. 2. Environment – oysters keep water clean. Argument to control development, protect clean waters – economic argument to push back against development to politicians. 3. Working waterfronts – will use them or lose them. 4. Ecotourism – kayak companies etc. can visit oyster leases, educational, buy some oysters. 5. Branding – oysters is a product that carries place name wherever it goes, unlike shrimp, etc. "Cedar Island Selects" and tag shows location and lease #, good for local foodies. Jay buys seed from Jimmy Morris' hatchery. Has a batch by 18 months. Sell singles up to bags of 100.

VA 56 million dollar oyster industry, year before 45. Why not us? Negs: public trust bottom, people don't want to give it over to aquaculture. But 99 percent is open. Commercial Fishing won't come back like the 1970s, so what are we saving it for? Tourists and anglers? NC can give VA run for its money w/in a couple of years. West Coast 100 mill dollars (WA, OR, CA). Average lease 5 acres employ income for 4 people, Year Round! Reach into the future w/ a foot in tradition. Would DEC like to write a letter to legislators in support? Biggest obstacle in Core Sound is moratorium. This would give young people opportunity.

How will people learn? Penny Hooper introduced the CCC aquaculture instructor, she helped start the program. Penny can't grow oysters because of high salinity, boring worms. Bill in legislature to study Core Sound moratorium for a year. [A socioeconomic analysis of comm. fish core sound, 60% fewer fishers in CS]. Water Column lease 100 bushels / acre required. 93.5 acres of Core Sound leased today. Use existing leases? Not feasible for fishers who need to work near their waterfront/gear. Better siting methods today to determine best lease areas. Why not have an oyster festival here, w/ tastings? Show different tastes from different waters. Jay: you could build a little farm gazebo w/ picnic tables while people eat and drinks. Oyster and wine event, etc. Farmed oysters 3 X value of wild oysters. Jay is part of Walking Fish. Biggest concern is hurricanes – a gear issue.

More growers helps business, like a coop – help each other. Good for state and DE. James: my saddest time DE at public hearing in Atlantic, fishers protested, I think back on those fishing families who have had to leave the commercial fishing industry. But the tide is changing – we as a community should get behind job creation, job for stayers.

Farmed oysters not a “resource” for DMF to manage, not a good fit. Within 3 years oysters would outpace all other Fisheries together. Jay: 2 acres on one side of bay, 4.5 on the other. Using 1 of the 2 acres. One acre is all we can handle. Lillie: this issue needs leadership, an apprenticeship program. New instructor at CCC, we have a program – they can start as freshmen and have 2 yr degree by high school. (Chuck is new guy w Sea Grant). We need the farmers, the students. BIG farms on other side of sound, thousands of cages (Wanchese Fish Co). Penny: 50 acre limit, NC manages, selects for small outfits. Now zero tolerance on siting on sea grass/SAVs. Any expansion would be in select areas, head of creeks. Worst case scenario: more oysters in the water. Jay: want to get community meetings going? Original bill was to open portions of CS, but Sanderson changed it to “study” due to complaints. Guest column for the Down East Community News!

OLD BUSINESS:

Action Items Update:

- Roads improvement on tap this July, pavement from East Carteret to Cedar Island
- Fisheries? James: Preserve America grant declined.
- Coastal roadside market update: Mark wants to move on this – we should contact Catherine Elkins
- Lights on public access fishing pier in Straits: Anthony reports that County Parks and Rec on board, county supports but budget process is slow. Not a dead issue, should materialize in future.
- Mariner’s Park: Danny Styron reappointed to EMS board, looking for a rep to serve on that.
- Down East on County Boards: opening on EMS
- Signs: Richard: Welcome signs moving right along. Ken Humphries has tweaked it. Boat number will reflect first settlement DE, 1704? Ken and Richard visited sign companies, going w/ Beaufort CCBS. Quote, 5K, 10K for two signs, one sided. Will need to raise funds for installation and upkeep. CAMA now questions sign in marsh grass. Now must move to transitional area, higher ground. No problem for CI. North River more complicated, nearer the tree line. Now compromise, where marsh grass transitions, but not hidden in bushes.
- Non-profit approved, Lillie says we need to open checking account.
- Electronic Waste bin Down East: James talked to county manager, they are working on a plan to bring electronic disposal bins to sites.
- Scholarship:
- May 4 Williston meeting to talk about clam house.

New Business:

Motion: meeting adjourned at 8:35

Minutes respectfully submitted by Barbara Garrity-Blake, Secretary and Lillie Chadwick Miller, President.