

Ball Pond Advisory Committee

MINUTES

September 13, 2012

7:00 p.m.

A regular meeting of the Ball Pond Advisory Committee was held on Thursday, September 13, 2012 in the Town Hall Conference Room.

Cynthia Stevens called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Terry Lent and Peter Viola were also in attendance. Brian Bosley, George Buck, and Helen Gallagher were absent. A quorum was not attained, so therefore the meeting was only informational and no business was conducted.

Approval of Minutes:

General Correspondence:

Public Comment:

Mark Spellman was in attendance. He has begun the process of seeking the Selectmen's approval to serve on the Ball Pond Advisory Committee, but he has not been sworn in to date.

Gary Mummert was in attendance. He has been a visitor of the Ball Pond area for many years and will be moving here shortly. Gary is very interested in composting and would like to see better use being made of the weeds being harvested from the lake. He ultimately would like to create an organic community garden and composted soil would be very useful for that. Cynthia Stevens mentioned the composting concept to Bruce Lockhart, who BPAC – as well as many homeowners – hires to remove weeds. He thought the idea sounded feasible. Cynthia Stevens will contact Public Works to find out if the composting could be done at the Town drop-off center and specifically how that would work given the limited hours that the center is open. Mark Spellman has a contact in Brewster, NY, who is composting. He will ask him his opinion.

Laurie Busse was in attendance. She is the Secretary of the Ball Pond Estates Property Owners. They are spending a large amount of money on weed removal via Waters Edge Landscaping. They are still finding that the coon tail is very dense. They are hoping for help or suggestions from BPAC. She was wondering if there is another species of fish that would work better with the coon tail. Cynthia Stevens explained the history of the carp project (related to milfoil) and how it seems like the carp are eating around the coon tail. She referred to an email from George Buck:

From: George Buck <georgebuck2@earthlink.net>
To: "ballpondlady@sbcglobal.net" <ballpondlady@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Fri, September 7, 2012 1:27:59 PM
Subject: Changing the grass carp stocking methodology

For the past few years we have had a problem in the late spring and early summer with weeds growing to the surface in areas of the pond where the water depth is about ten feet or less. This happens in the south end and in the northwest and northeast corners of the pond plus along any of the shorelines where this water depth occurs. The reason this occurs is we have too few grass carp of optimum size in the pond.

Our weed analysis period is in the first week of August when a lot of the summer

weeds have died back and it gives us a false reading. Our carp population needs to be managed at a number that controls the maximum weed growth periods such that there are no weeds growing to the surface except in the few feet along the shore where carp don't swim. Those weeds can either be ignored or managed by the lakefront property owner.

The reason we have too few carp is our attrition rate of 10% is probably too low. It should be modified to 15% and our stocking rates and frequencies should be recalculated to see how many carp would be in the pond with this higher attrition rate.

We also rely too much on older grass carp. Mike Freeze from Keo Fish Farms in Arkansas, our supplier for our grass carp, says that grass carp do not provide much weed eating success after about five to seven years of age. Mike is a fisheries biologist and handled grass carp studies for the Arkansas DNR so he knows about our problem.

We have also transitioned from predominantly milfoil to predominantly coontail. Coontail is harder to control because it branches much more than milfoil and has more bio-mass in the early summer.

Finally, our weed study in early August does not give us a measure of peak weed growth and peak bio-mass. If we did our weed study the last week of June we would be stocking more grass carp.

We should stock as many grass carp as necessary to eliminate weeds growing to the surface in late spring and early summer. Until we control our weeds at the peak growing period so that there are no weeds on the surface we are not accomplishing our mission. So the recommendation is for using an attrition rate of 15%, recalculating our current grass carp population of carp in the age group up to seven years of age and then adding what is needed to get the optimum grass carp population back up to just over 400 grass carp of optimum size in the pond. This calculation will require somewhere in the range of 200 more grass carp to be stocked this fall or spring. To do less than this will continue to result in a shortfall of grass carp and weeds growing to the surface in the early summer and our community will be less than satisfied.

I can virtually guarantee stocking within the next year of 200 more grass carp will not over-stock the pond. We know this from the NY DEC study and stocking rates at Walton Lake, a lake virtually identical to Ball Pond in every way, where an attrition rate of 22% was used. Until we manage the pond such that there are never weeds growing to the surface we have not met our goals.

Managing weeds in any body of water is part science, part observation and partly an art form of sorts. What weed species you have, doing your weed studies or observations during peak weed growth periods, modifying stocking rates and attrition rates, stocking every year to combat attrition and old age among existing carp, environmental changes in weather, water chemistry and other factors all have a bearing on the process and strategy. We are still on the learning curve. Few grass carp projects have made as much progress as we have at Ball Pond but we are maybe only a third way there to having the right formula. We should

not be satisfied until we consistently maintain our weed bio-mass with the goal of no weeds to the surface at the peak weed growth period. Until then we are not finished with fine tuning our methodology.

We need to dialogue these thoughts with our DEEP team and come up with a new formula and strategy.

Old Business:

- Carp
 - Mark Spellman (public) explained his “carpulator” concept using 15% attrition rate.
 - Cynthia Stevens would like to stock now or in the spring.
 - Carp are eating the coon tail.
 - George Buck recommends that we treat to the peak.
 - Cynthia Stevens thinks we should go to the State and say that we need a new strategy.
 - Peter Viola suggested we need to research whether or not there’s another species that would eat coon tail more efficiently.
 - Cynthia Stevens explained the process of applying for carp. We will ask for 200. Cynthia Stevens suggests that we call a special meeting soon to vote on making the request.
 - Mark Spellman (public) thinks we can just ask for the number based on attrition and that we just plainly need 411 all the time; Cynthia Stevens thinks we need to be more thorough in our argument and be persistent. She feels that since we need a permit from the State, we need to maintain our relationship with them.
 - Cynthia Stevens will check with Brian Bosley, George Buck and Helen Gallagher about convening a special meeting on September 19th.

The next regular meeting of the Ball Pond Advisory Committee will be on Thursday, October 11, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Lunch Room.

The meeting ended at 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Darlene Anderson-Alexander
Recording Secretary