

**Harbor/Shellfish/Fish Committee
Joint Meeting
Bristol Town Hall
July 29, 2021**

Harbor Committee members present: Robert Ball, David Caron, Rick Poland, John Stolecki, and John Stotz

Shellfish Committee members present: David Cheney, Steve Lackovic, Ronald Poland

Fish Committee members present: Jay Crooker, Rick Poland

Also present: John Bowers, Leon MacCorkle, Dom Pucci, Mike Sherman, Cameron Williams

At 5:02pm, Stolecki opened the meeting explaining the meeting had been called for discussion about a proposed experimental aquaculture lease for oysters which will be located in the Upper Pemaquid River nearest to the tax parcel identified as Map 004, Lot 081.

Stolecki and the Town's Administrator, received official communication from DMR about this lease application on July 20, 2021. The applicants are Lloyd Bracy and Peter Lombardo. The proposed lease is to be located in the Pemaquid River, north of Coombs Cove. The total acreage is 1.6 acres.

Pucci shared a power point presentation titled "Why the *North of Coombs Cove Oyster Lease Application* Should be Relocated to a More Appropriate Site" and Sherman shared the public comments sent to DMR by him and his neighbor.

Harbor Committee Concerns:

- Navigation. Will oyster beds affect the depth of the channel over time?
- Will the lease produce any type of silt wall that could affect the migration of alewives and/or eels?
- Multiple errors on the application.

Shellfish Committee Concerns:

- There are other locations in the river where the lease site would have less impact.
- Reduction in soft-shellfish harvest areas if the lease size increases.
- Reduction in soft-shellfish harvest areas as oysters escape from the lease and leaseholders try to protect their oysters.
- The soft-shell clam resource is taken away from commercial harvesters but also recreational harvesters.
- Once this lease is in place, it is very likely it will be enlarged, and Pemaquid River will be home to additional leases.
- The Shellfish Committee has been working with FB Environmental, Inc. on water quality of the lower portion of the Pemaquid River for the past four years and they wonder how the lease will affect the project.
- Committee conservation work has included transplanting oysters from the Damariscotta River to the Upper Pemaquid River for the past two years. Will they be able to harvest the transplanted product if the lease is approved?
- Committee conservation work has included green crab trapping in the Upper Pemaquid River. Will they be able to continue if the lease is there?
- DMR's bacterial pollution notices has the lease site classified as conditionally approved, closed May 1 through September 30.

- Errors on the application. #11.D.4 asks “Are there shellfish beds or fish migration routes in the surrounding area?” Applicants answered no but there are multiple soft-shell harvesting areas nearby.

Fish Committee Concerns:

- The town has made a big investment with a new fish ladder in Bristol Mills to increase the annual alewife run.
- Returning alewives may sense that the water is chemically different and not enter the river.
- Errors on the application. #11.D.4 asks “Are there shellfish beds or fish migration routes in the surrounding area?” Applicants answered no but Pemaquid River supports an annual alewife and eel migration.

Residential Concerns:

- Sacrifice wildlife migration, soft-shellfish harvesting and recreational boating and fishing.
- Concerned with access to privately owned docks/floats located near and to the north of the lease site.
- Maintenance diving on lease will cause the channel to be shut down.
- Bubbles created from divers may spook alewives trying to get upriver.
- If the aquaculture lease were to expand, channel usage may be compromised.
- Oyster growth on bottom will make the channel shallower.
- What type of economic benefits will the town receive?
- Location of the lease could be moved to another area of the river, away from the channel, in front of Coombs Cove, perhaps.
- Errors on the application. The answer to #8.A.3 states “area above the lease site drains out at low tide”. Bowers owns the most northern dock/float and says the channel does not drain out.

Cheney, owner of a 10-acre lease, fielded several questions. Overall, he thought it was a good location for growing oysters. The warm shallow water, gravelly bottom and access to the channel was ideal for growing oysters. He stated the best time for oyster harvest/maintenance is when there is a current in the water (changing of tides). Oyster beds are beneficial to water quality, invertebrates, such as baby lobsters and can be used as natural storm barriers

Although residents are not against the idea of an aquaculture lease in the river, they would prefer to see a different location away from the channel. They are very concerned with commercial expansion of aquaculture in the river.

Stolecki encouraged the Shellfish and Fish Committees to submit a letter to DMR before the comment period ends, August 21. He advised everyone to make substantial arguments and to provide proof using pictures or videos if possible.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:48pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rachel Bizarro
Harbor Committee & Shellfish Committee Secretary