Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee
MINUTES
1.13.2025
Virtual

Annual General Elections (9:00-9:15a)

Welcome

Attendees:

Voting Members: Nick Mikash (alt. for Peter Bode), Donna Friedman, Jennifer Grieser, Pat Gsellman, Joe Hadley, Scott Hardy, Jennifer Heard, Bill Hughes, Elaine Marsh, Julianne Kurdila, Whitnye Long Jones, Joe MacDonald, Samantha Martin, Erica Matheny, Elaine Price, Bryce Pulley, Thomas Rayburn, Mike Sekerak, Megan Smith, Jordyn Stoll, Meghan Tinker Paynter, Katie Wells, Christina Znidarsic

Ex-Officio/Resource: Sarah Barrow, Amber Bellamy, Hannah Boesinger, Janet Deardorff, Ed Kender, Suse La Gory, Bryan Hinterberger, Leah Medley, Kris Patterson, Megan Shaeffer, Beth Sparks-Jackson, Nichole Lopez (CSWCD – Staff), Kristin Hall (CSWCD – Staff)

Guests: Laura Bonnell, Ashley Binion-Zuccaro, Zach Cebula, Pam Davis, Laura Gooch, Emily Kao, Julie Kastanis, Bruce Kole, Joshua Kocik, Tom LaPlante, Mark Matteson, Andrew McGibbon, Kairsten Nitsch, David Ritter, Justin Telep, Heather Ullinger

Election of Members and Officers (see proposed resolutions on pgs. 5-6) – E. Price

Motion to approve the slate of candidates presented for election to the Advisory Committee from J. Hadley, seconded by D. Friedman.

In favor: J. Heard, B. Hughes*, K. Wells*, D. Friedman, M. Tinker Paynter, J. Hadley, P. Gsellman*, S. Hardy, J. MacDonald, C. Znidarsic, M. Sekerak, J. Kurdila, S. Martin, E. Marsh

*Abstaining from their own election.

Approved by majority of voting members.

Motion to approve the officers presented for (re)election to the Advisory Committee from E. Matheny, seconded by J. MacDonald.

In favor: B. Hughes*, E. Marsh, W. Long Jones, K. Wells, M. Tinker Paynter, D. Friedman, J. Hadley, M. Smith, S. Hardy, J. Heard, E. Price, E. Matheny, P. Gsellman, C. Znidarsic, J. MacDonald, B. Pulley, S. Martin, M. Sekerak

*Abstaining from their own election.

Approved by majority of voting members.

Appointment of Subcommittee Leadership (see proposed resolutions on pg. 6) – J. Grieser

Recognition of Retiring Members – J. Grieser

- Certificates were presented to J. Kurdila, J. Hadley, and E. Marsh.

Recognition of Members with Perfect Attendance – J. Grieser

- Certificates were presented to E. Price and P. Gsellman.

Adjourn

Quarterly Advisory Committee Meeting (9:15-10:15a)

Attendees:
Voting Members: Sarah Barrow, Nick Mikash (alt. for Peter Bode), Zach Cebula, Donna Friedman, Jennifer Grieser, Pat Gsellman, Scott Hardy, Jennifer Heard, Bill Hughes, Tom LaPlante, Whitnye Long Jones, Joe MacDonald, Erica Matheny, Elaine Price, Bryce Pulley, Mike Sekerak, Megan Shaeffer, Megan Smith, Jordyn Stoll, Meghan Tinker Paynter, Heather Ullinger, Katie Wells, Christina Znidarsic

Ex-Officio/Resource: Amber Bellamy, Hannah Boesinger, Janet Deardorff, Ed Kender, Suse La Gory, Bryan Hinterberger, Leah Medley, Kris Patterson, Beth Sparks-Jackson, Nichole Lopez (CSWCD – Staff), Kristin Hall (CSWCD – Staff)

Guests: Laura Bonnell, Ashley Binion-Zuccaro, Pam Davis, Laura Gooch, Joe Hadley, Emily Kao, Julie Kastanis, Bruce Kole, Joshua Kocik, Julianne Kurdila, Elaine Marsh, Samantha Martin, Mark Matteson, Andrew McGibbon, Kairsten Nitsch, Thomas Rayburn, David Ritter, Justin Telep

Approval of Minutes of October 21st, 2024 – *Motion to approve by J. Stoll, seconded by B. Hughes. All in favor with no abstentions.*

Public Comment – None.

Old Business

- Updated Big Creek Study – J. Grieser
- BUI 10 Removal Celebration & Champion of the River Recap (10/17) – N. Lopez

New Business

- Newly Elected Members Short Introductions – All New Members
    - S. Barrow, Z. Cebula, T. LaPlante, M. Shaeffer, H. Ullinger
- Review of Advisory Committee Member Commitments and Requirements – J. Grieser (see addendum pg. 7)
    - Submission Required: Conflict of Interest Form and Signed Alt. Appt. Letter

    - New Member Orientation: TBD
        - Hosted by B. Hughes. N. Lopez will coordinate the best date with new members and share invite with all members.
        - New members can also reach out to J. Grieser for a one-on-one conversation about the AOC.
- Cuyahoga County's Fresh Water Institute, Founding Member Opportunity – B. Hughes
    - Attended a kick-off forum for interested organizations to become a founding member, in support of its three pillars: education and research, advocacy and access, and economic development. This could potentially be a new opportunity for the Advisory Committee.
    - B. Hughes will follow up with more information on the commitment required to become a founding member. Emily Bucha, the new director of the Cuyahoga County Fresh Water Institute, will hopefully be able to present at the April quarterly meeting.

USEPA Great Lakes National Program Office Update – S. La Gory

- Transition to S. La Gory, who will be taking over as the new task force lead.
- The current budget is operating under a continuing resolution, which is in effect through mid-March.
- Internal funding: A couple of projects are currently awaiting approval, including the Euclid Creek - E. 185th St. Spillway Fish Passage and the Boston Mills Restoration projects.
- Great Lakes Area of Concern (GL AOC) Conference: Sept. 16-18 in Toledo, OH
    - A limited number of travel scholarships will be available around March to interested members.
    - For more information on the speakers, contact K. Patterson.
- The GLRI Action Plan IV has been released: *https://www.glri.us/action-plan-iv*

OLEC Update – H. Boesinger

- The West Creek Flume removal project is nearing completion, with only planting remaining in the Spring. NEORSD is scheduled to conduct post-project monitoring.
- The Mayfield Sands Ridge project is currently under construction.
- The Beach Closings (Recreational Use) BUI 10a was removed in September 2024.
- Sampling for navigational dredging is being conducted by the Army Corps, with results to be released later this year. The BUI removal analysis will be led by OPEA, with potential removal slated for 2026.
- The Lake Erie Environmental Justice Program will be released early February, with an upcoming Request for Proposals expected to be due mid-April. OLEC plans to distribute one large grant of up to $750,000 and up to five small grants of $75,000 in the first cycle.
    - More information: *https://lakeerie.ohio.gov/funding-oportunities/protection-fund/lake+erie+ej+grant*

Facilitating Organization Update (Cuyahoga SWCD) – N. Lopez

- 2024 Annual Report
    - CSWCD will be drafting the annual report to be published in March. The Advisory Committee will have an opportunity to review by the end of February.
    - Reminder to all members to disclose any outreach or educational presentations that occurred in 2024 to include in the annual report.
- Quarterly Newsletters
    - To be coordinated following each quarterly meeting. Open to any ideas, suggestions, or content from the Advisory Committee.

Subcommittee Updates

Overview of Current Subcommittee Assignments – N. Lopez

- Members will need to confirm their subcommittees assignments.

Governance – K. Wells

- 2025 Advisory Committee Application Process – Complete!

Public Engagement – S. Hardy

- Currently in the slow season, but there is a priority to broaden engagement opportunities in 2025. Suggestions are welcome.
- A thank you was extended to those who participated in the OSU video highlighting the AOC restoration efforts in NEO.
- 2024 Champion of the River – the City of Cuyahoga Falls will be recognized again by J. Greiser at the Jan. 27 city council meeting.

Strategic Implementation – J. Stoll

- AOC Story Map Update
  - Work is underway with NEORSD, and a meeting to discuss the design is scheduled for January 27.
- The Doan Brook Daylighting project will not be proceeding as an AOC MAP, but there are current efforts to find a replacement. A meeting with stakeholders is scheduled for Jan. 22 to discuss potential new projects.

Announcements Pertinent to BUI Delisting Activities

- The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2025, a federal funding program, is currently in Congress seeking reauthorization of up to $500 million annually.
  - B. Hughes & S. Martin will be joining the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition 2025 Great Lakes Days in Washington DC.
  - E. Price recommended the Advisory Committee to provide a letter of support. Majority agrees and B. Hughes will be drafting a letter for review.
- The Great Lakes Mapping Act has been introduced in Congress: *https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/7020*

Cuyahoga AOC Committee 2025 Quarterly Meeting Schedule – Apr. 14 (TBD), Jul. 14 (TBD), Oct. 20 (TBD)

Adjourn @ 10:12a

Board Resolution of Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee

Board Appointments and Reappointments

The following resolution is proposed for adoption by the Advisory Committee (the "Committee") of the Cuyahoga River Area of Concern:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the following individuals are hereby elected to the Committee to a two-year term, beginning at the Board's January 13th, 2025 meeting and ending December 31, 2026:

Sarah Barrow, Summit Soil & Water Conservation District – *Government*

Zach Cebula, Cleveland Cliffs – *Business*

Jenn Grieser, Cleveland Metroparks – *Government*

Pat Gsellman, Member of the Public – *Non-Profit*

Jennifer Heard, Cleveland Division of Water Pollution Control – *Government*

Bill Hughes, Member of the Public – *Non-Profit*

Tom LaPlante, Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization – *Government*

Erica Matheny, Tinkers Creek Watershed Partners – *Non-Profit*

Bryce Pulley, City of Cuyahoga Falls – *Government*

Megan Shaeffer, Summit Metroparks – *Government*

Megan Smith, City of Akron Watershed Division - *Government*

Heather Ullinger, City of Akron Engineering Bureau – *Government*

Katie Wells, Interlake Maritime Services – *Business*

Board Resolution of Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee

Officer Appointments

BE IT RESOLVED FURTHER that the following individuals are hereby (re)elected to hold Officer positions of the Advisory Committee, as noted below, for a two-year term ending upon the first Advisory Committee meeting of 2027:

Committee Chair: J. Grieser

Committee Vice-Chair: B. Hughes

Pursuant to this election of Officers, let the AOC Advisory Committee Members recognize the appointment, by the AOC Advisory Committee Chair, of the following members as sub-committee Chairs:

Governance Chair: K. Wells

SIP Chair: J. Stoll

Public Engagement Chair: S. Hardy

AOC VOTING MEMBER WORK AND RESPONSIBILITIES - *include, but are not limited to*:

- Committing to a two-year term starting in January
- Attending at least 75% of the meetings each year (usually held quarterly) (average ~2 hours/meeting);
- Assisting with at least one outreach/education event each year;
- Participating on at least one work group or subcommittee;
- Actively participating in making recommendations and voting on issues and other Advisory Committee business;
- Staying informed about what is going on in the Cuyahoga AOC, asking questions and requesting information;
- Acting in the best interests of the Cuyahoga AOC and recusing oneself from votes where there is (or may be perceived) a conflict of interest;
- Acting in full compliance with Ohio Ethics Law;
- Interpreting the Cuyahoga AOC's work and values for the community; and,
- Working in good faith with other Advisory Committee members, the Facilitating Organization, and Ohio EPA towards achievement of the agreed-upon common goals and priorities.