

## **Meeting Minutes - 9/17/25**

The Water Quality Committee focused on several key agenda items, including the approval of minutes (approved by all on committee), budget updates, and stakeholder engagement strategies. Julia confirmed the town board's approval of the secretary position and associated costs retainer costs with Cornell Cooperative for the first half of 2026, anticipating a grant decision by April or May. She noted interest from five community members wishing to join the committee and suggested reaching out to the secretary candidate to participate as a private citizen until funding is available in 2026. It was also decided that the committee candidates would be invited to join the remaining meetings of 2025 and a decision on selection would take place by the end of the year. Descoteaux highlighted that while the town board typically sets a quorum for task force size, they may be open to increasing membership based on engagement levels.

Descoteaux made a motion endorsing Bernadette Winby as the Secretary for the fiscal year 2026, highlighting her leadership skills and the need for younger perspectives. Dennis & Natalie seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously by the committee. The committee discussed the current open positions, noting one vacancy and the absence of an official secretary. Although the endorsement was made, Winby will not take on the role until the next fiscal year. Descoteaux emphasized the importance of member participation in meetings, suggesting that attendance should influence task force member selection, and expressed hope that upcoming elections would boost community engagement.

Concerns regarding water quality at Upton Lake were raised, with residents voicing differing opinions on the lake's health and the Homeowners Association's efforts to address issues. Charlie shared his past experiences with algae growth management and the involvement of the Department of Environmental Conservation in ongoing studies. He stressed the need for increased stakeholder engagement, particularly from Upton Lake residents, to foster balanced discussions on water quality.

Dennis outlined strategies for stakeholder engagement, emphasizing the importance of identifying both active and less involved participants. He noted that financial constraints and lack of awareness could hinder participation, proposing a comprehensive outreach plan that includes grassroots marketing and separate meetings for different stakeholder groups. He proposed creating categories of stakeholders, focusing on residents who are interested in participating in the water quality program. He noted that these residents could be subdivided by location, such as those living near Huns Lake or Upton Lake. Additionally, he identified institutions like town hall and Millbrook School as key stakeholders, suggesting that tailored messaging could enhance engagement with these groups. Additionally, he discussed the challenges faced by for-profit businesses in

obtaining necessary approvals and the implications of recent legislation on water quality inspections.

The committee discussed the importance of hamlets forming associations to improve community involvement in water quality initiatives. It was noted that areas like Bear Market already have informal community structures that could be leveraged. The committee also discussed the challenges of water testing, emphasizing the need to reassure residents that testing would not target individuals. The committee's approach aims to empower residents through education and collaboration, ultimately addressing the diverse needs and concerns of the community regarding water quality issues.

The committee addressed the significance of a water testing survey for the agricultural community, noting that previous surveys had limited responses. She suggested that providing privacy assurances could enhance public engagement and mentioned the necessity of understanding existing water testing practices among residents and businesses to tailor future information campaigns and grant proposals.

**Action Items:**

- \* Julia will reach out to Bernadette Winby to ask if she is interested in participating as a private citizen for two months until she can be brought on as a paid secretary in 2026.
- \* Julia created a [spreadsheet](#) to populate with stakeholders that are known to the committee.
- \* Julia will ensure that any future survey questions are reviewed and refined to ensure they align with the committee's goals for information gathering before distribution.
- \* Julia will invite the candidates for the Water Quality Committee to the next meeting to observe and participate.