



**Minutes
Quarterly Meeting
Wednesday, September 2nd, 2020**

10:00am-12:30pm

1. Call to order and Roll Call

Members present: Philip DeGaetano (Chair-NY), Jeffrey Myers (NY), Judith Baron (NY), Selvin Southwell (NYDEC), Rose Trentman (NY), John Scagnelli (Vice-Chair, NJ), Bruce Friedman (NJDEP), Loel Muetter (NJDOH), Virginia Wheatley (NJDOH), Alena Baldwin-Brown (NJDEP), Patricia Sesto (Vice-Chair, CT), John Atkin (CT), Pamela Scully (CTDPH), David Wrinn (CT AGO), Philip Trowbridge (CTDEEP).

A quorum was present.

Additional attendees: Evelyn Powers (IEC), Lauren LaRusso (NJ GAU), Aimee Boucher (EPA Region 2)

2. Notes from the June 3rd, 2020 Quarterly Meeting (Appendix A)

Ms. Powers presented the notes from the June 3rd, 2020 quarterly meeting as well as the summaries from the June 30th, 2020 and August 10th, 2020 Executive Meeting Summaries. Although there was not a quorum for the June 3rd, 2020 meeting and therefore no official minutes for voting, the notes of the meeting were distributed as Appendix A. Summaries of the Executive Committee calls (appendices B and C) were also distributed and will be referred to as relevant items on the agenda are discussed.

3. IEC Finances and Current Grant Funds Update

a. Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet (Appendices D and E)

Evelyn Powers presented the Profit and Loss statement (Appendices D) for the period October 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 and the and Balance Sheet (Appendix E) as of August 27th, 2020. Total income for the period from all grant sources were \$510,582 while total expenses were \$480,403. Commissioner Scagnelli asked about the Professional Services line item under Direct Expenses and Indirect expenses and why there two different categories for professional services. Evelyn Powers clarified that professional services in the direct category refer to services that are directly related to performing the workplan tasks of a specific grant, such as boat charter, subcontracted laboratory analyses or equipment maintenance. Indirect professional services include administrative professional services such as legal fees, accounting, payroll, and IT/website support services. The suggestion was made that professional services be broken out to provide more detail. Evelyn Powers indicated that this is possible in QuickBooks, each line item can be selected to view and

breakout its components. Evelyn will be working with accounting firm, which will be able to present monthly dashboards once the onboarding process is complete.

b. Onboarding of New Accounting Firm

Evelyn Powers reported that the onboarding process of the new accounting firm, Jitasa, has begun and she will be working with the firm, as per the agreement to perform an accounting review back to April 1, 2020 and year-end financials. Onboarding consists of submitting various grant documents and budgets to the firm based on checklists.

c. Funding and Grants Update

Evelyn Powers updated the Commission on the status of pending and awarded grants and funding sources.

- CWA §106 FFY20 Grant status (\$728,000)

The Commission's §106 FFY20 award (\$727,000) is anticipated to be awarded by September 30, 2020. Evelyn Powers has been working with EPA Region 2 to address re-budgeting and revisions necessary as a result of a change in the Commission's indirect rate. Aimee Boucher with EPA Region confirmed that the grant paperwork was going through the process and the award was on track to be awarded by September 30, 2020.

- LISS FFY20 Base Program Budget Award (\$192,797)

The Commission's FFY 20 Base Program budget award was awarded in August. This award funds IEC's western LIS monitoring for the period October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021.

- LISS Prior Fiscal Years' Remaining (\$187,804)

Funding remaining in prior years' LISS funding is \$187,804. Some of this funding is earmarked for equipment, such as a Total Organic Carbon (TOC) analyzer, and some will be drawn down when invoices for charter boat services are received.

- CWA §106 FFY18 Remaining Funding (\$114,237)

The Commission has \$114,237 remaining in FFY18 §106 funds that expire on September 30, 2020. IEC will be submitting a no-cost time extension (NCTE) request to EPA to extend the expiration date of the grant due to COVID-19. Evelyn Powers has communicated with EPA Region 2 regarding the pending request, which is anticipated to be granted.

- CWA §106 FY 19 Remaining Funding (\$824,707)

The Commission has \$824,707 of funding remaining in its FFY19 §106 grant. Original award amount was \$903,000. This grant expires 9/20/2021.

- Save the Sound Funding

The Commission also has two agreements with Save the Sound. One agreement provides approximately \$45,000 in funding for IEC's monitoring in Little Neck Bay and Manhasset Bay as part of the Unified Water Study, an embayment monitoring program coordinated by Save the Sound. The other agreement is associated with performing chlorophyll analyses on reference samples submitted by all embayment groups participating in the study. This is approximately \$30,000 of funding. Both of these projects should wrap up by December, with monitoring occurring through October and chlorophyll analyses continuing through November.

- Restore Americas Estuaries Coastal Watershed Grant Program Letter of Intent

Evelyn Powers is working with Professor Wallace at CSI on a letter of intent regarding a proposal submission to the Restore Americas Estuaries Coastal Watershed Grant Program. The proposal would involve microplastics, metals, and nutrients sample collection and analysis on samples

collected from the Arthur Kill and tributaries to assess source and interaction of these contaminants. Obviously, the Commission would not be able to participate in joint research with CSI if access is routine access is not granted. The timeline for the grant submission would be November if a full proposal is requested, with funding awarded in January 2021.

d. IEC FY20-21 Budget Update

Evelyn Powers provided an update on the Commission's FY20 budget expenditures to date. As illustrated in Appendix D, the Commission's FY 20 expenditures to date (October 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020) were \$480,403.89. This represents 40% of the Commission's FY20 budget of \$1.18 million, with 75% of the year completed.

e. Appropriations Update

Evelyn Powers reported on FY20 appropriations and projected FY21 appropriations. IEC received all appropriations due in the respective states FY19-20 years. IEC anticipates receiving its NYS SFY 20-21 appropriation of \$41,600, \$15,000 in SFY20-21 appropriations from New Jersey and \$3333 from Connecticut. Commissioner Sesto also reported that the Town of Greenwich likely has additional local match available through in-kind projects above what has been committed for FFY20 federal grant commitments.

4. Director's Report

Evelyn Powers, IEC Executive Director, provided an update on the Commission's current and upcoming projects. Despite some delays and modifications due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission has resumed most of its scheduled and anticipated monitoring activities.

a. Projects and Updates:

- Volunteer Pathogen Monitoring Program

The Coordinated Volunteer Pathogen Monitoring Program, originally anticipated to begin after Memorial Day, began in early July. Three groups are participating in the program: Freshkills Park, sampling two sites in tidal creeks in the former Staten Island landfill; the lower Raritan Watershed Partnership, which is sampling seven sites along the lower Raritan River and Raritan Bay shore, and the Hackensack Riverkeeper. Groups are performing pathogen sampling, collecting samples for enterococcus and fecal coliform which are transported to the IEC laboratory for analysis, as well as field parameters pH, dissolved oxygen, temperature and salinity.

- Long Island Sound Monitoring

Long Island Sound Monitoring in the western Long Island Sound resumed June 30th, with weekly monitoring surveys to 22 stations to monitor dissolved oxygen and parameters related to dissolved oxygen.

- Unified Water Study

As mentioned in grant funding, IEC has an agreement to perform monitoring in Little Neck Bay and Manhasset Bay in conjunction with the Unified Water Study, a study of Long Island Sound embayments coordinated by Save the Sound. The study schedule, which usually runs from May through October, was pushed back to June. IEC began its monitoring on June 15th, and will continue performing monitoring surveys twice per month in both embayments, with some

additional (“Tier II”) monitoring in Little Neck Bay, including deployment and maintenance of two dissolved oxygen loggers

- Laboratory Proficiency studies

The laboratory is resuming proficiency studies on certified parameters. NYSDOH cancelled the spring and summer proficiency studies. Proficiency studies are anticipated to resume with the October bacteriology PT study. IEC has continued to perform PT’s for NJDEP OQA-certified parameters procured from NELAP certified providers.

- Eelgrass Pilot – Conference House Park, Staten Island

IEC has not historically been involved in habitat restoration, but is an area that increasingly a cross-cutting issue related to interstate water quality issues. IEC is participating in a pilot eelgrass restoration project in the waters of Raritan Bay off Conference House Park. In coordination with the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program, NYC Parks and the Cornell Cooperative Extension program in Southold, NY, which supplied the eelgrass shoots, IEC assisted with the deployment of buoy-deployed eelgrass seeding project in mid-August. IEC performed some water quality monitoring to inform the deployment and will continue monitoring water quality and report on the results of the program, which will not be known under the late spring/early summer.

b. Laboratory Operations and Update

- COVID-19 Impact on Laboratory and Field Operations

At the Commission’s June 3rd meeting, we began discussing the need to get the Commission’s monitoring operations up and running again. The first step toward achieving that was getting essential monitoring equipment out of the laboratory so we could perform field work. Field equipment was retrieved on June 5th, enabling the resumption of seasonal monitoring programs on schedule.

- Temporary Laboratory Space

The hurdle of laboratory access remained an issue in mid-June, with access to the Commission laboratory as well as all research laboratories at the College of Staten Island restricted. IEC’s seasonal monitoring programs involve prep work and calibrations as well as post-sampling filtration and processing of nutrient samples, requiring appropriate laboratory space to perform analyses. Evelyn Powers reached out to several entities that offer shared laboratory space, including NYU and BioBat. BioBat referred IEC to the Downstate Biotechnology Incubator, which is associated with the SUNY Downstate Health Sciences Center in Brooklyn, New York, which had shared but dedicated laboratory space available for short-term leasing arrangements. The College of Staten Island waived the quarterly stipend payment for the third quarter, which facilitated funding of a short-term lease. Following a visit to the proposed space by Evelyn Powers and IEC Environmental Analyst Inna Golberg on June 18th, Evelyn Powers reached out to EPA Region 2 and the Executive Committee to brief them on the situation. On June 30th, the IEC Executive Committee approved the signing of a six-month lease of approximately 900 square feet of laboratory space at 710 Parkside Avenue “Tech@710,” one of the Downstate Biotechnology Center buildings. IEC staff was granted access to the College of Staten Island laboratory on July 16th to retrieve additional equipment to move to the Brooklyn laboratory space.

- Permanent Facility Search

Evelyn Powers reiterated that while the temporary space in Brooklyn meets the Commission's immediate needs, it is not adequate as a permanent long-term space. The facilities at the College of Staten Island were not adequate or large enough before the COVID-19 pandemic, and it will not be adequate after the pandemic has subsided. Accordingly, the search for a permanent, long-term space continues. Based on conversation with brokers, options are fairly limited. It is important to understand that any option is going to have buildout costs and there are essentially three avenues to fund buildout costs: EPA funding for direct supplies related to buildout as earmarked in FY19 106 funding and additional indirect (overhead) funds associated with EPA funding, IEC reserves, and tenant incentives provided by landlord. Most likely some combination of all three of these sources will be necessary. Eva Kramer, BioBat President, reached out to Evelyn Powers in early August regarding a 5000 square foot space immediately available to subdivide and lease at BioBat. Evelyn Powers, Chair DeGaetano visited the space on August 20th, accompanied by Selvin Southwell (NYSDEC representative) and Inna Golberg (IEC staff) and met with the building's architect, contractor and engineer.

Chair DeGaetano outlined the efforts to get a refined scope of work and cost estimate in an expeditious manner in order to have an informed discussion and decision on feasibility and path forward. Chair DeGaetano indicated the first impression of the space was positive. The process will involve first getting a term sheet developing cost estimates for buildout through engagement with an architect. IEC has requested a design proposal from one architect and will request others. Chair DeGaetano also reached out to the Empire State Development Corporation at the suggestion of BioBat to see if there was any possibility of funding to facilitate buildout. The ESD indicated they do not provide funding to government entities. Chair DeGaetano indicated that we would continue to follow up on tenant incentives and reiterated that the small lab space we are looking to identify is in short supply and high demand. Philip Trowbridge (CTDEEP) commented that it is a complicated process and appreciated the efforts that have been put in. CTDEEP is going through a similar process to upgrade its research vessel and engaging with an architect to review concept design options will be key. Commissioner Scagnelli concurred that the Commission needs to understand the scope of work and financial commitments necessary for any space.

- c. Other meetings and project/grant updates

- Social Media and email newsletter launch!

Evelyn Powers reported that the Commission launched its social media presence at the end of June and Commissioners are encouraged to visit and share the Commission posts. IEC social media pages can be found at the following links:

Find us on:

Facebook @ https://www.facebook.com/iec_nynjct

Twitter @ https://twitter.com/iec_nynjct

LinkedIn @ <https://www.linkedin.com/company/interstate-environmental-commission>

- Association of Clean Water Administrators (ACWA)
Evelyn Powers reported that she was elected to represent Interstate agencies on the board of the Association of Clean Water Administrators.
- Restore Americas Estuaries Long Island Sound Session
Evelyn Powers is presenting as part of a panel discussing water quality monitoring in Long Island Sound as part of the Restore Americas Estuaries Annual conference, which will be held virtually September 29-October 1st.
- National Water Quality Monitoring Council Conference Session
Evelyn Powers will be co-chairing a panel with Shawn Fisher, USGS on *Effective Monitoring Collaborations and Partnerships in the NY-NY Harbor* at the National Monitoring Conference to be held virtually in April, 2021.

5. Old Business

a. Commissioner vacancies

Evelyn Powers reiterated the importance of filling the two member vacancies that exist in New Jersey. With three members from each state required for a quorum and only three members from New Jersey, it makes assuring a quorum difficult.

6. New Business

Several Commissioners expressed the desire to hold future meeting via a more interactive virtual platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. No additional new business was brought up for discussion.

7. Upcoming Meetings

Wednesday, December 2nd, 2020 via Zoom?

Wednesday, March 3rd, 2021

Wednesday, June 2nd, 2021

Wednesday, September 1st, 2021

8. Adjourn

A motion, duly made and seconded, was made to adjourn the meeting. With no one opposed, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:42am.

APPENDICES:

A- March 3rd, 2020 Annual Meeting Notes

B- June 30th, 2020 Executive Committee Call Notes

C- August 10th, 2020 Executive Committee Call Notes

D- Profit and Loss Statement

E-Balance Sheet