



Minutes for January 30, 2024

RSC Representatives present: Anne Slugg, Chair (Sudbury), Emma Lord (NPS), Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Ron Chick (Framingham), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham-Alt), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Marlies Henderson (Billerica), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Tom Sciacca (Wayland)
RSC Representatives absent: Dan Cook (Carlisle), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt)
Guest: Hannah Volk (NPS)

Welcome and Minutes

7:02 pm Ms. Lord introduced Hannah Volk as an NPS River Conservation Fellow working from Concord, NH on various communications projects for the Partnership WSR program. Ms. Volk joined the meeting to learn more about the SuAsCo RSC. Ms. Lord asked for corrections to the November Minutes, there were none. Ms. Henderson motioned to accept the minutes as presented, Ms. Hempel seconded. The motion passed 9-0.

River Ambassador Update

7:06 pm Ms. Brown spoke about representing the RSC with Mr. Chick at a New Year's Eve event on the Cochituate Rail Trail in Framingham. They spoke to many people about the SuAsCo as they handed out S'mores and candy canes. Mr. Chick estimates that the event attracted between 700-1,000 people. Ms. Brown then spoke about multiple Concord projects. She said that the proposed mixed-use development at 758 Elm Street in Concord has been approved by Concord's ZBA. The project will provide storm water improvements and invasive species management for the site's wetlands. The Concord Planning Board confirmed that there have not been any changes to The Assabet River Bridge design since it was last presented to the RSC. Ms. Brown shared a rendering of the planned mixed-use development at 166 Commonwealth Avenue which is located near Nashoba Brook and just across from the Warner's Pond dam. She shared a site layout for a planned residential development called Assabet River Bluff which is located on the Assabet River and which will eventually include a publicly accessible trail.

Sixteen Concord residents were appointed to the Warner's Pond Subcommittee. Their members are drawn from abutters, the Recreation Commission, Friends of Warner's Pond, the Select Board, the Natural Resources Commission, the Concord Scout House, the Public Works Commission, the Hassanamisco Band of Nipmuc, Department of Corrections, and the Assistant Public Works Engineer. She said that the Wayland Conservation Commission just approved a wetlands permit for the path from the Council on Aging to Cow Common. The final alignment of the path has not been determined but it will include 900' of blazing and tree clearing, 0.3 miles of initial construction, and 600' of surfacing with stone dust. Ms. Brown said that MCI Concord is closing in the summer of 2024. The Town of Concord was taken by surprise and has no plans yet on how it will use that land. The onsite water treatment plant on the Assabet River is of great interest to the town.

7:34 pm Ms. Slugg thanked Ms. Brown for her updates which keep Council members informed about issues they may be missing and her work following up on river-related issues in member towns. She then turned to Ms. Hempel to give an update on the RSC's Warner's Pond Subcommittee.

Warner's Pond Subcommittee

7:35 pm Ms. Hempel said that the RSC's Warner's Pond Dam Subcommittee will inform Concord residents about the history of the site, the benefits of dam removal, the realities of what dam removal would mean, and address misconceptions that have surrounded the proposed removal. The group would like to create an educational video on the dangers of leaving the dam in place and the benefits of its removal. The video would be between 2-4 minutes in length. It will be "evergreen" and utilized throughout the period leading to the Town Meeting vote in May 2025. It will be informational not positional; it will not advocate for one side or the other. The Subcommittee will develop a landing page on the RSC website to educate the public. It will link to an OARS page with more detail. OARS will assist with the updating. The Subcommittee will monitor progress of Concord's Warner's Pond Task Force and one Subcommittee member will attend Task Force meetings. The Subcommittee intends to develop a seasonal speaker series about topics related to dam removal. Those talks will be given at Gerow Park, which is located along the edge of Warner's Pond. The Concord Bridge will publish a series of 9 monthly interviews led by Ms. Hempel. These will be written in a Q&A format featuring local experts. Topics will focus on benefits of the dam's removal, including the health and migration of resident and migratory fish, historical context of the site before the dam was constructed and ecological restoration. She will address misconceptions such as the site being used for housing or a sports field after the dam removal. The first interview will be with Paul Kirshen, a professor of climate adaptation in the School for the Environment at UMass Boston and Research Director of the Stone Living Lab. The Subcommittee requested funding not to exceed \$10,000 from the RSC's surplus fund to produce a 2-to-4-minute educational video. The actual budget will be determined at a later time.

7:50 pm Ms. Lord asked if anyone objected to the Subcommittee further exploring the video idea and coming back to the RSC with more concrete numbers. No one objected. She then put forth a motion to reserve up to \$10,000 for the Warner's Pond Subcommittee video work. The motion passed 8-1 with one abstention.

OARS Grant Update

7:53 pm Ms. Lord said that she previously emailed Council members a copy of OARS' interim report for their 2023-2024 partner grant work. That report discussed the work OARS' completed from August to December 2023. Ms. Lord said that she would send OARS reimbursement for that work.

AMC Community Grant Update

7:55 pm Ms. Lord said that Amber Stearns is AMC's new Bay Circuit Trail Coordinator. She sent Ms. Lord AMC's updated Community Grant proposal from 2022, which Ms. Lord circulated by email to RSC members. Ms. Stearns has been talking with Wayland Conservation Administrator Linda Hansen about the project. The update describes how the AMC, in 2024, is proposing to use the \$10,000 grant that the RSC awarded them in 2022. She said the Council had to approve the updated plan. A discussion followed on the width of the new trail, the absence of a diagram showing the rerouted portion, and interest in re-scheduling an AMC led site walk that had been cancelled.

8:10 pm Ms. Henderson submitted a note saying that she had to leave the meeting early. She wrote that she had received the MHC paperwork for the Talbot Mill Dam Removal. Todd Melanson is the new Superintendent of Billerica's Water Treatment Plant. She is considering submitting a warrant article to rezone the 2-acre Gilson Hill parcel so that it can no longer be developed for industrial purposes.

Framingham Letters of Support

8:06 pm Mr. Chick said that Framingham is asking for RSC letters of support for two CPA applications related to Carol Getchell Trail improvements along the Sudbury River. One grant is for \$30,000 for a conceptual design to reconstruct the stairway from the Stapleton Elementary School to the river. The Framingham Conservation Commission has written grant applications to Mass Trails and the Framingham Community Preservation Committee to add an observation deck and to replace 1,000 feet of the boardwalk which ends at the stairway to the Stapleton School. If funded, the combined grants would create 3 experiential outdoor classrooms along the river trail. After Ms. Lord determined that there were

no objections to submitting letters of support for these grant proposals she said that she would write and submit them on behalf of the RSC.

Talbot Dam Removal

8:13 pm Ms. Field-Juma spoke about the Talbot Mill dam. She said that the Draft Environmental Impact Report is almost ready to file. Once that is filed a comment period will be announced. NOAA has started the consultation process. An assessment is done to determine what negative impacts there may be on historical resources. A discussion will follow on how to mitigate those impacts.

OARS Update

8:17 pm Ms. Field-Juma said that OARS' new Executive Director will start on February 7th. She will overlap with that person for one month. Then the RSC will get a new OARS representative, who is usually the Executive Director or the Policy Director. OARS has been working with the Hop Brook Protection Association because of Hop Brook's high phosphorus levels. The source of the nutrients is Hager Pond in Marlborough where the wastewater treatment plant was discharging huge amounts of phosphorus until the plant was upgraded. Those nutrients keep getting washed down into the Hop Brook system. The Hager Pond dam is the most high-hazard, unsafe dam in the watershed. She said that it should be removed or repaired, but no one claims to own it. The dam removal process begins with the dam's owner filing for funding or at least stating they want it removed. There is no mechanism for dealing with this particular situation. One possible solution would be for the municipality to take it over, but that is a big responsibility and comes with a cost.

8:30 pm Ms. Hempel motioned to adjourn, Mr. Sciacca seconded and the motion passed 9-0.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan