



## Minutes for July 25, 2023

**RSC Representatives present:** Anne Slugg, Co-Chair (Sudbury), Emma Lord (NPS), Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Ron Chick (Framingham), Sam Corbin (SVT), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham-Alt), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Marlies Henderson (BillERICA), Ellie Sablak (Assistant River Ambassador), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt), Tom Sciacca (Wayland)

**RSC Representatives absent:** Dan Cook (Carlisle), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Frank Richichi (Bedford-Alt)

### May Minutes

7:03 pm Ms. Slugg opened the meeting. Ms. Henderson moved to accept the May Minutes as circulated. The motion passed 9-0 with 1 abstention.

### 2023-2024 Community Grants RFP and Application

7:12 pm Ms. Lord said that the Community Grant RFP, which she previously emailed to Council members, was nearly unchanged from last year's document. She said that if Council members are comfortable with the language she would release it at the beginning of August with a submission deadline of October 10th, with the goal of reviewing grant applications and making funding decisions at the October RSC meeting. Ms. Hempel remembered that the Council earlier discussed asking applicants to note any fees they would charge if they invited the public, and wondered if we could add a line for anticipated fees to the public on the proposal, and also ask the grant applicants to consider offsetting those fees somehow for people who would like to attend but for whom the fees would be difficult. Ms. Lord said that language could be added stating that a certain amount of the award would be set aside to subsidize some attendees if admission or other types of fees were going to be charged.

Ms. Lord asked if there was any interest in reviving a small group of Council members who would be willing to review the RFP's ahead of the monthly meeting to sort out any issues that could be time-consuming at the general meeting. Ms. Slugg said that any Council member working with the organization submitting an RFP should disclose that information. It was decided that the October meeting would be moved from October 31<sup>st</sup> to October 24<sup>th</sup>.

### River Ambassador Updates

7:17 pm Ms. Lord turned the meeting over to the River Ambassadors. Ms. Sablak and Ms. Brown began their presentation on the Riverfest events which had been completed so far. At least one of them attended all RiverFest events. They enjoyed talking to attendees about the SuAsCo and the RSC. At those events they offered river maps and RSC literature. The materials were popular with attendees. Ms. Sablak showed slides and described many events, including a paddle starting from Route 225 in Carlisle and the History Paddle with Brian Donohue starting at Route 20 in Wayland. There were about 45 people on Peter Alden's walk through West Concord. About 20 people joined the Natural History of the Sudbury River walk at Great Meadows. The highlights of the walk along the Assabet with Jeff Collins were sightings of a broad winged hawk, an indigo bunting and a scarlet tanager. Four children attended the Junior River Ranger event at the Old Manse. That event included hands-on learning with an Enviroscape model. About 20 birders attended Lincoln's Bird Walk at Codman Farm which was led by Michele Grzenda. Will Leona led 10 paddlers on an exploration of the Sudbury River and Fairhaven Bay. About 30 people attended Ms. Henderson's walks and paddle event

centered on Thoreau's life and writings. It began at the Talbot Mill dam and ended at the Canal Museum. Ms. Sablak shared a slide showing that Riverfest attendees through the end of July had come from a total of 16 towns. She also listed the sources that people gave of where they had heard about Riverfest events. Ms. Henderson thought that Framingham must have done a good job with promotion because she doesn't usually have Framingham residents at her events but she had several this year.

7:29 pm Ms. Brown spoke about non-Riverfest, River Ambassador activities during July. She and Ms. Sablak represented the RSC at Farmers' Markets in Billerica, Framingham, and Wayland, which was a first for the River Ambassador program. She said that there has been a lot of interest in learning about the Wild & Scenic River and its designation at those events. Ms. Brown attended the first stormwater financing workshop presented by Mass Rivers Alliance and partially funded by the RSC. She said there were 89 participants.

7:32 pm Ms. Brown showed slides of the River Ambassadors work over the past month. She is working with the Concord Land Conservation Trust on their water chestnut removal program. The area is just upstream of Emerson Hospital. They have removed 600 bushels of water chestnuts so far, which is more than was collected last year and previous years as well. There are still 4 more weeks of the program. The River Ambassadors and other volunteers will continue to help with this project over the next 4 weeks. Mr. Chick said that he has documented a successful program for removing water chestnuts by hand by pulling at the end of May or beginning of June when the plants are small and the nutlets haven't rooted. He recommended this method because you get very little biomass when you pull at that time of the season as compared to mid-summer. He said the best methods for reducing biomass at pulls towards the end of July or in August would be to cut the tops off because the plants would not have time to repopulate and produce viable nuts or turn over the plants and pick off the nutlets. Ms. Brown said the River Ambassadors are reaching out to media. The Concord Bridge is running a series on climate resiliency and will be interviewing the River Ambassadors for an article on the Concord River. She provided an update on Warners Pond in Concord. The Town issued an RFP for engineering and design services for a preliminary design for dam removal. A final decision on the dam removal has not yet been made. There is still a lot of community interest in saving the pond. Ms. Sablak and Ms. Brown visited a site on Baker Avenue on the Assabet where Concord is considering building out the recreational facilities which now include a parking lot and a canoe landing. A plan for some kind of multi-use development will be submitted at some time in the future for the lot abutting the Assabet River near the Concord Rotary where the Papa Razzi restaurant used to be.

7:45 pm Mr. Simms thanked the River Ambassadors and everyone who worked on RiverFest this year. He appreciated all the work involved in the new schedule of events over multiple days and weekends rather than the single weekend of previous years. Ms. Brown thought attendance was up, some people signed up for multiple events but there were also new people at each event. Attendees are happy that they don't have to choose among events. She said there was some thinking that next year we could offer limited enrollment events more than once so that more people could be involved. Mr. Sciacca thought we were fortunate to have volunteers running their events even once. Ms. Lord said that Ms. Sablak has been doing a great job on the RSC's Facebook and Instagram accounts. She noted that there were more opportunities for reaching the public over six weeks of RiverFest than there was with just one weekend.

#### 7:57 pm **Talbot Dam Removal**

Ms. Lord said that there was a lot of activity around the Talbot Dam removal. The public comment period will end on August 9th, there would be a public listening Zoom session and a public site walk. She is drafting the RSC's comment letter. Mr. Chick said he will submit a personal comment letter. Ms. Henderson said that she submitted a letter as a Billerica resident saying it would improve environmental conditions in Billerica. She did think it could impact the historic district and made some suggestions on mitigation for that area.

Mr. Fadden referenced the 2016 Gomez and Sullivan study. He said that he and Ms. Field-Juma have been trying to locate a memo, likely from 2022, which was an extension of the hydraulic study for low and normal flows upstream of the Fordway Bar. The memo was an evaluation of the effect of the dam removal on the

Sudbury and Assabet Rivers. It concluded that the rivers would probably be lowered by a matter of inches. He believes it is unknown how far up the Sudbury River the effects of lowering the level will reach. He is concerned about some boat launches which already develop mud layers during drought, and how lower water levels will affect Heard Pond. Mr. Fadden said there was a memo where Gomez and Sullivan said they would have to project the water levels to the Sudbury impoundments and he thinks that is important information to have, that the RSC's input should be based on facts and not undocumented numbers. Ms. Slugg said that the RSC would have to submit its letter by August 9th. The Town of Sudbury wanted to see the RSC letter before it submitted its own.

### **Strategic Plan Review and Update**

8:21 pm Ms. Slugg said that it is time to look at the RSC's 5-year Strategic Plan. Council members should review it to see what we identified as wanting to accomplish and what we actually accomplished. We could identify why we didn't accomplish certain things and discuss whether those items should still be on a future plan. We could add new items. Ms. Lord said that the Strategic Plan is for 2019-2024. She and Ms. Slugg will send out the Strategic Plan with some prompts asking Council members to review it and identify areas where we have accomplished some things, areas where we are working on completing projects, and areas we haven't really touched on. We will spend the September meeting reviewing those observations and making suggested edits to the Strategic Plan if needed. We could update the Plan over the next few months.

### **Dragonfly Mercury Project on August 7<sup>th</sup>**

8:24 pm Ms. Lord said that this will be our third year participating in the Dragonfly Mercury Project. The RSC team will be sampling for dragonfly larvae on August 7th. Any RSC member who is interested in helping out should contact her directly.

8:26 pm Ms. Slugg asked for a show of hands on who would be interested in the RSC's August paddle. There were 6 raised hands. She said that she would send out an email on possible dates and getting the names of those who wanted to attend. That group could decide on the location for the paddle. She noted that there will be no August meeting. She said that she and Ms. Lord would be circulating the RFP and the RSC's Strategic Plan for Council members to work on.

8:31 pm Mr. Chick had an update on Framingham. He said that the NOI for the Getchell Trail CPA grant is being written. The plan for creating 1,500 feet of accessibility and replacing it with a pedestrian footbridge is being held off until next year.

8:33 pm Ms. Slugg closed the meeting.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan