



## Minutes for September 26, 2023

**RSC Representatives present:** Anne Slugg, Co-Chair (Sudbury), Emma Lord (NPS), Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham-Alt), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Marlies Henderson (Billerica), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt)

**RSC Representatives absent:** Ron Chick (Framingham), Dan Cook (Carlisle), Sam Corbin (SVT), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Frank Richichi (Bedford-Alt), Tom Sciacca (Wayland)

### July Meeting Minutes

7:03 pm Ms. Slugg opened the meeting. Ms. Henderson motioned that the July Minutes be approved as circulated, Ms. Hempel seconded and the motion passed 9-0.

### River Ambassador and Riverfest Updates

7:08 pm Ms. Brown gave an update on River Ambassador activities over the past month, beginning with RiverFest events. She showed slides of a photography walk at Heard Farm with Henrik Broekman. She said the archery and fishing activities were cancelled on Family Day at Great Meadows because of unsettled weather, but many activities were set up in the large room and went well, as did Snake Man's event. About 10 people attended the Saxonville History walk led by a member of the Framingham History center. Highlights included a short walk on the Carol Getchell Trail and a stop at the Danforth Street Bridge which marks the beginning of the SuAsCo WSR. Roger Beatty led about 10 canoes during The Sturgeon Full Moon Paddle on a roundtrip from Sherman's Bridge to Fairhaven Bay. Mike Duclos and Allan Fierce from the Nashoba Valley Pedaler club led a 35-mile bike ride which crossed the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers. Family Day at the Old Manse included plein air painting, a performance by an ensemble dance company, yoga on the lawn, several craft activities, a Story Hour, a talk on literature about the 3 rivers by Ron McAdow, and a talk by Margie Brown on garden restoration at the Buttrick House. A member of the West Concord Cultural Council brought art supplies and met 8 children for the Kids Bike for The Rivers event near the train station. They decorated their bikes and then rode to the Jennie Dugan swamp near the Concord Middle School where students from the Environmental Club talked about wetlands. The last RiverFest 2023 event was a walk from Foss Farm to Greenough Pond led by Alan Ankers. Participants took more of an inland walk than expected because the river was too high to walk along.

Ms. Brown attended the Talbot Dam MEPA site walk. She said that the Secretary's Certificate has been issued. She noted that the Certificate and all public comments received are viewable online:

<https://eeaonline.eea.state.ma.us/EEA/MEPA-eMonitor/submittal/67299d8c-a440-45c0-b5ac-f0b220053851> Both River Ambassadors participated in the Dragonfly Mercury Project. Ms. Brown shared photos of the collection process. She attended the last online workshop on Stormwater Financing which was organized by Mass Rivers Alliance and partially funded by the RSC. There were 54 attendees on that call, none of whom were from SuAsCo member towns, though individuals do have the ability to view the workshops online and have done so in the past. Both River Ambassadors worked on buckthorn removal at the Wayland Greenways Conservation Land and on water chestnut removal in the Sudbury River. Ms. Brown biked on the Assabet River Rail Trail and suggested that trail as a possible site for a kids' bike ride during RiverFest 2024. She stopped by the Fun Kayak locker storage area at Ice House Landing in Maynard. Those lockers each contain a kayak, a paddle, and a PFD which can be rented for 2 hours. She paddled with the Concord River Kayak Meetup Group and has recommended that group to people unsure of how they would get on the river.

7:29 pm Ms. Henderson wanted to learn more about the kayak rental company. Ms. Brown said their website is: Rent.fun and that Dedham and Maynard are the only towns in this area that use this company. Ms. Field-Juma thought it

would be good to invite someone from Maynard to talk at an RSC meeting about their experience with the company. She then asked Ms. Brown what she thought about the new model of RiverFest. Ms. Brown thought spreading it out over multiple weekends was a huge success. There was good attendance at most events, even with iffy weather. People really liked the brochures. There was, however, poor attendance at most of the kids events. More people learned about events through social media and Meetup groups than through the brochures. Many people signed up early for activities and then didn't show, which was unfortunate for events where attendance was limited. She suggested opening the signup periods closer to the scheduled event date. Ms. Lord said that she spoke with Monty, who developed the RiverFest webpage and helped with the brochures, and he commented on the increase in engagement on our webpage with the events spread over 6 weeks. Ms. Brown thought Ellie Sablak did an excellent job with promotion on our social media. Ms. Slugg asked what she thought of extending RiverFest, either with earlier events or later ones. Ms. Brown said that theoretically she would like to extend RiverFest events throughout the season. She said that she would be willing to lead walks on lesser-known river trails, such as the Carol Getchell Trail or areas in Billerica as a way of extending RiverFest. She suggested listing those walks on Adult Ed websites and possibly in OARS' and SVT's newsletters. The RSC could start a SuAsCo Meetup group to advertise the walks. She would be happy to start work on these ideas but she would need help with social media. Ms. Slugg thought that the RSC should support any community engagement work. She thought the RSC could hire someone to work remotely for projects like this, possibly a college student. Ms. Brown said that Ms. Sablak might be willing to help out. Ms. Brown thought that the title of Assistant River Ambassador should be changed to Seasonal River Ambassador to better reflect the variety and quality of Ms. Sablak's work.

### **RSC Strategic Plan Review**

7:43 pm Ms. Lord said that the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan was developed to go along with the RSC's updated Conservation Plan in 2019. She thought the Council could review the progress that has or has not been made. She would then add those assessments to a joint RSC reviewed color-coded progress report on our Strategic Plan. To start, she thought that the Council did well with Land Protection and Stewardship goals due to our partnerships with OARS, SVT, Mass Audubon, CISMA and Lowell Park, in addition to our Community Grants. She suggested creating a compilation of Master Plans for members towns. Town representatives could learn when those Plans would be updated and then look for opportunities to get RSC information into those Plans during the updating process. This information could be tracked on a shared spreadsheet. Town representatives could annually review and update a contact list she has created of individuals at conservation departments and other municipal departments in member communities.

Ms. Hempel wondered what was meant by Measure 1d: "RSC reps determine a joint platform or set of recommendations to bring to their towns." Ms. Lord said she could envision a subcommittee developing a list of consistent recommendations to bring to each town. A discussion followed on the best approach for this since the municipalities are so different from each other. Ms. Field-Juma thought we could start with a bullet list of things we'd like to discuss with town staff, such restoring river continuity, cleaning up storm water, loss of tree cover, etc. We could decide on what a course of action could be, such as making sure that all stream crossings follow the River and Stream Crossing Standards. Ms. Hempel wondered if a campaign to remove invasives would be appropriate. Ms. Slugg said that work would probably fall to CISMA.

8:04 pm Ms. Lord moved on to the Water Quality and Quantity section of the Strategic Plan. She said that much of the work there is under the purview of OARS through our Partners Grants. Ms. Brown noted projects that Council members directly participated in, such as the recent Wayland fish study looking at PFAS and mercury as well as continued work with the Dragonfly Mercury Project. Ms. Field-Juma thought the Mass Rivers Alliance stormwater financing workshops, to which the RSC contributed substantial funding, were well-attended and noted that the in-person presentations were all given by communities in this watershed.

8:07 pm Ms. Koch said that in October DEP will begin a continuation of the Nyanza fish sampling study. A contractor may be doing the field work. They are primarily looking for mercury in bass. They will be sampling 6 reaches, 3 of which are in Great Meadows. Reach 8 runs from Route 20 to Fairhaven Bay, Reach 9 is Fairhaven Bay and reach 10 is Fairhaven Bay to the confluence with the Assabet. They will do the upper reaches of Ashland to Heard Pond in one 5-year cycle and the lower reaches, which would be Route 20 to the Assabet for the next 5 year cycle.

Ms. Lord noted that the RSC has made an effort to develop relationships with DCR and DER, which is a Water Quality goal in the Strategic Plan. In addition, it reached out to MWRA. However, there was no further contact after our 2021 MWRA presentation on their role in water supply reservoirs. That was probably because MWRA can't do much about releasing more water for ecological flows because they have mandates. Ms. Field-Juma said that MWRA has done expansion studies for Northeast, South, and the MetroWest system. Many SuAsCo communities asked to be included. This affects flow because if some of our communities join, they would be drawing up the streams from their water extractions in the dry years.

Ms. Slugg said that we need a one-page paper for communities which outlines what the RSC is and what our role should be in municipal planning processes. They should know when we should be included, when we have oversight and what our authority is to weigh in on issues. We could create that for communities who need our help on certain issues but who don't know a lot about the RSC. We could explain when they could use us, when it would be helpful for us to write a letter, when we would weigh in, such as for a federal action on the river. That would help people understand what role we can play. Ms. Field-Juma said that if there was convening around MWRA's expansion plan the RSC could take a position on communities that are a high priority for connection because, as far as we can tell, that would improve the flow in WSR and that is something the towns may not have thought about.

### **Updates**

8:24 pm Mr. Fadden said that the Birch Road wellfield is officially dead, so Item 4b under the Water Quality and Quantity section can be removed from the Strategic Plan. Ms. Field-Juma said that MWRA's draft MetroWest expansion study is now available.

8:33 pm Ms. Field-Juma said that there were no unexpected public comments received on the Talbot Dam as part of the MEPA process. Submitting the Environmental Impact Report will be the next step. OARS will soon create, and then continue to update, a FAQ sheet about Warner's Pond. She will meet with Ms. Hempel to learn more about any information OARS can add to the dam removal discussion.

8:45 pm Ms. Lord said she would send out the community grant proposals to RSC members 2 weeks before the October meeting for their review so that they can make funding decisions at the meeting.

8:47 pm: Ms. Henderson motioned to adjourn. Ms. Slugg seconded, and the motion carried 10-0.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan