



Minutes for October 24, 2023

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

RSC Representatives absent: Sam Corbin (SVT), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Frank Richichi (Bedford-Alt)

Guests: Delia Kaye, Concord (Natural Resources Director), Ed Nardi (Concord Natural Resources Commission)

Minutes

7:02 pm Ms. Slugg opened the meeting. Ms. Henderson motioned to accept the September Minutes as circulated. Ms. Hempel seconded, and the motion passed 10-0.

7:04 pm Mr. Sciacca referred to the RSC's MWRA discussion during the October meeting he was unable to attend. He said that Wayland is in the process of building an emergency, short-term MWRA connection which should be operational by the summer of 2024. That connection is being built primarily to add capacity for summer droughts. After the MWRA connection becomes official the only active wells in Wayland will be the Happy Hollow wells between the high school and the Sudbury River.

Warner's Pond Dam Removal

7:08 pm Ms. Kaye introduced herself as Concord's Natural Resources Director and Mr. Nardi as Chair of Concord's Natural Resources Commission. She said that Concord had been considering removing Warner's Pond dam since at least 2012. After the 2012 "Warner's Pond Watershed Management Plan" was published Concord considered dredging to improve the pond's ecological capacity and make recreational improvements. The dredging option was dismissed in August 2022 when the only bid received came in at \$9,000,000. Looking for more affordable options, Concord worked with EA Engineering consultants who produced an Alternatives Analysis report that recommended dam removal as the best option from ecological, recreational, climate change and liability perspectives. That announcement created a shift in Concord toward looking at dam removal. A plan for a 30% dam removal design that also incorporates possible recreational improvements is currently in progress. Ms. Kaye expects that a Warrant Article for the dam's removal will be brought to the 2024 Town Meeting. It will ask for an up or down vote on removing Warner's Pond dam. A small cohort of voters submitted a petition not to remove it. That was signed by about 800 people from both inside and outside Concord. She believes that the Warner's Pond dam removal effort would not pass if it were put to a vote tomorrow. She very much appreciated that OARS will host an informational Open House on the dam removal. Concord will hold three public meetings about Warner's Pond in the near future, including one on November 8th. Ms. Kaye said that she was speaking to the RSC because Concord's Natural Resources Department is looking for organizations, entities, boards, and commissions that would be willing to offer support for Warner's Pond dam removal.

7:16 pm Ms. Field-Juma shared a screen showing a locus map of the Warner Pond area. She noted that Warner's Pond is located near a Wild and Scenic segment of the Assabet River. She traced the route of Nashoba Brook starting from Acton, flowing through a wetland, entering into Warner's Pond and exiting through Warner's Pond dam, passing under a bridge, past the Nashoba Brook Bakery, and then joining the Assabet River. She said that if both the Warner's Pond dam and the Talbot Mill dam were to be removed it would be a straight shot for fish migrating from the ocean to get to Nashoba Brook where they could breed.

7:19 pm Mr. Nardi said that erroneous theories are circulating in Concord, such as that dam removal is being forced on the voters and that beavers' dams will flood the neighborhood once the dam is removed. He believes that public meetings will make a difference to counteract those theories and will follow the science concerning the millions of fish which would enter Nashoba Brook habitat. Ms. Kaye said that the main pushback is coming from immediate abutters to the pond as well as people who grew up on the pond and think that they will lose the ability to paddle, ice skate, fish, and just enjoy it as they have historically been able to do. Mr. Chick asked if residents are talking about the benefits of having migratory fish in Nashoba Brook. Ms. Kaye said they were not.

7:27 pm Ms. Kaye explained that the dam is built to withstand 100-year flood events, which is not good enough with today's climate change. Mr. Sciaca said that the worst flooding in Wayland over the past 100 years hasn't been the result of a single 24-hour storm but rather having a series of multiple storms a week apart, as happened in 2010. Similar storm patterns occurred in 1936 and 1955.

7:32 pm Ms. Slugg asked if there were specific things the RSC could help with. Ms. Kaye said that submitting a letter to the Concord Bridge about why the Council is in favor of the dam removal would be very helpful, as would having RSC members attend the November 8th meeting because a lot of opponents are expected to attend. RSC representatives, acting as individuals, could write letters to the Concord Bridge to provide their thoughts on the dam removal. Mr. Cook said that another theory from the opposition is that new housing would be built on the floodplain created by the stream that would flow after the dam removal. That theory must be countered with the facts at a public meeting.

7:39 pm Ms. Hempel said that the group opposed to the dam removal is well organized, erudite, and formidable. She wondered about starting an RSC subcommittee to work with Ms. Kaye. That group could offer a counter narrative to the campaign being waged in Concord. She thought the RSC group could hold its own informational sessions in Concord. Mr. Cook said he would join that group. Ms. Brown said that she would attend the November 8th meeting.

7:45 pm Ms. Slugg thanked Ms. Kaye and Mr. Nardi for speaking at the meeting. She said that she would send out an email asking which Council members would like to join an RSC Warner's Pond Subcommittee. Ms. Slugg then said that Ms. Brown had prepared a River Ambassador Update which is important to the Council, but unfortunately time would not allow for that presentation. The Council needed to move on to the Community Grant proposals discussion.

7:49 pm The Council discussed Hudson Schools "Growing Watershed Families" proposal asking for \$6,735 for expanding family involvement in their Landmark series.

7:52 The Council discussed the Massachusetts Environmental Research Alliance (MERA) proposal asking for \$12,000 for "Sudbury River Testing Phase 2 – Stewardship Based on Science" in Wayland and Framingham.

7:55 pm The Council discussed the Concord Museum's request for \$4,770 for their proposal: "Digging Into the Past: Native History in Musketaquid through Archaeology" which will replicate artifacts from their Teaching Collection.

8:00 pm The Council discussed Acton Conservation's request for \$5,200 for its proposal: "Sustainable Beaver & Flood Mitigation Management" to install multiple pond levelers along Fort Pond Brook, a tributary of the Assabet River.

8:02 pm The Council discussed the \$5,200 request by the Assabet Coop for its “Assabet Coop Riverside Restoration” proposal for restoring riverside habitat and adding interpretive signage about the river on its viewing deck.

8:09 pm The Council discussed Farrington Nature Linc’s request for \$6,979.58 for its proposal: “Farrington Nature Linc Teen Leadership Program: Building Relationships with Local Rivers” which includes education and arts projects related to native species, invasive species, and water pollution.

8:19 pm The Council discussed the \$4,500 request for a “Friends of Minute Man Horticultural Internship Program” at Minute Man National Historical Park.

8:22 pm The Council discussed Mass Audubon’s \$14,924 request for its “Brewster’s Woods” proposal to add a kayak/canoe put-in location at Brewster’s Woods.

8:29 pm The Council discussed Mass Rivers Alliance’s request for \$13,362 for its “Dam Busters 101 Webinar Series”.

8:38 pm The Council discussed Ma’yan Tikvah’s “Judaism Outdoors!” proposal asking for \$6,450 to provide unique outdoor programming with a Jewish foundation for young adults. It includes multiple events along the WSR.

8:42 pm The Council discussed Wayland Conservation’s request for \$2,500 for its “Heard Farm Field Edge Invasive Removal” project which would clear invasive vegetation at the field edges of Heard Farm to increase the scenic value of the river.

8:51 pm The Council decided not to fund the proposals from Acton Conservation, Hudson Schools, Friends of Minute Man National Historical Park, and MERA. The Council discussed funding levels for the remaining proposals.

9:02 pm The Council agreed to fully fund the Assabet Coop, the Concord Museum, removal of invasives at Heard Farm, Judaism Outdoors!, and Farrington Nature Linc. It decided to partially fund the Brewster Woods canoe/kayak put-in for \$8,000, to partially fund the Dam Busters webinar series for \$8,667 and to offer to pay for interpretive signage for the Assabet Coop. The total Community Grant funding was \$42,567.

9:11 pm Ms. Hempel motioned to accept the slate of accepted projects with the caveat that a small amount of surplus funds from last year, \$1,492, will be carried over to fund this year’s community grant proposals. Mr. Sciacca seconded. The motion passed 10-0.

9:13 pm Ms. Brown said that she would electronically share the River Ambassador Update PDF she had prepared for the evening’s meeting.

9:14 pm Mr. Cook said that he has been working with a Neponset River watershed association which received funding to try to reduce water use in its 14 towns, starting with just one town. Now that association is looking to increase commercial industrial water conservation. He thought that might be an interesting program for the SuAsCo to consider.

9:17 pm Ms. Lord said that she would email Council members more information about the Warner’s Pond meeting on Nov. 8th and start a poll asking who would like to be involved with a SuAsCo Warner’s Pond subcommittee.

9:18 pm Mr. Chick motioned to adjourn, Mr. Sciacca seconded and the motion carried 10-0.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan