

## SuAsCo RSC Minutes for February 25, 2025

**RSC Representatives present:** Marlies Henderson, Chair (Billerica), Emma Lord (NPS), Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Matt Brown (OARS), Ron Chick (Framingham), Dan Cook (Carlisle), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Tom Sciacca (Wayland)

**RSC Representatives absent:** John Drobinski (Sudbury), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Laura Mattei (SVT), Frank Richichi (Bedford-Alt), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt)

**Guests:** Jon Metivier, Acting Deputy Conservation Agent for Carlisle

### Welcome, Carlisle Water Chestnut Pull and February Minutes

7:00 pm Ms. Henderson opened the meeting. Council representatives introduced themselves. Mr. Metivier introduced himself as the Acting Conservation Administrator for Carlisle. He said that Carlisle would like to do a water chestnut pull this summer in the Page's Brook watershed. That water flows into the Concord River. He shared a slide of the proposed work area. Mr. Metivier is expecting the Conservation Commission to require a Notice of Intent. A letter of support from the RSC in time for the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Conservation Commission meeting would be helpful. He would like to write the Order of Conditions with ongoing conditions so that the work can continue in future years.

7:13 pm Ms. Henderson moved to approve the letter of support, Mr. Chick seconded and the motion was approved 10-0.

7:14 pm Ms. Henderson asked if there were any edits for the February Minutes. Mr. Sciacca had one. He motioned to accept the Minutes as edited, Ms. Hempel seconded. The motion passed 9-0 with one abstention.

### River Ambassador Report

7:17 pm Ms. Brown said that there will be a **Community Forum in Lincoln** on March 10<sup>th</sup> concerning rescuing wildlife from **rodenticides**. Rodenticides are currently banned for residential use but allowed for commercial pest control companies. There is a movement in towns and cities in the state to ban their commercial use because of the harm done to raptors and other wildlife that ingest poisoned mice. She shared a Zoom link for that meeting.

7:20 pm Ms. Brown updated the Council with news from member towns. **Hop Brook Watershed Association** submitted a Community Preservation Committee grant application in Framingham which mainly concerns **phosphorous in Hop Brook**. They have requested about \$90,000. A substantial amount of that is for OARS' support for water quality sampling in Wayland. The moratorium on turf fields in Wayland, which has been in place since 2021, is being revisited. Oxbow Associates, a local environmental wetland consulting firm has supported a report on the damage to the wetlands. Mr. Sciacca said that the firm probably did not find a lot of overflow from the rubber because it had already been washed into the river. There is some money available to try to prevent more crumb rubber overflow. Mr. Sciacca thinks the decision will be for the minimal, low-cost approach which probably won't be the most effective option.

7:22 pm Ms. Brown attended a MACC meeting which discussed that **6PPD-quinine** is a highly carcinogenic contaminant of new concern which is associated with crumb rubber. Concord is still working with a property

owner who did a massive amount of vista clearing and is proposing high bush blueberries as mitigation. An information session is scheduled for March 10<sup>th</sup> on The Assabet River Bridge and Trail project that will span from 300 Baker Avenue to the West Concord MBTA station.

7:24 pm Ms. Brown said that MCI-Concord has been closed, the prisoners are gone, and the state, through the Dept. of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance, has been tasked with the disposition of the property. The state has allowed Concord to give some input. Concord is interested in developing a plan for an agricultural field and a triangular parcel given to the Concord Housing Development Corp for affordable housing in lieu of building at Brewster's Woods. Their Advisory Board developed a Request for Proposals. The housing plan should begin permitting in 2027 and construction in 2028. Concord is interested in taking over the wastewater treatment plant which does need some rehabilitation. The property includes about 1,500 feet of frontage on the Assabet River and another 1,000 feet around the confluence with Nashoba Brook.

7:30 pm The **Warner's Pond Task Force** is still working to finalize the three different proposals that they will present to the public: dam removal, dredging, and a plan with options for volume which is a sort of maintenance proposal. There is still some discussion of a fish ladder though there is concern that the fish may not use it. The ladder also doesn't address water quality, sediment build-up, and invasive aquatic species.

7:34 pm Ms. Hempel showed a rough cut of the 4-minute long **Warner's Pond dam removal video**. She noted that there were corrections to be made to the script, such as adding mention of the Wild and Scenic River. She said that the Warner's Pond Subcommittee would like to pay the second half of the videography bill, which is \$3,925. Mr. Sciacca moved to approve that payment, Mr. Cook seconded and the motion passed 10-0. Ms. Hempel said the final version of the promotional video should be ready by the RSC's March meeting.

### **Environmental Topics**

7:49 pm Ms. Henderson said that a recent Mass Association of Conservation Commissioners webinar discussed turf fields. She learned that organizations for the Mystic River watershed and the Charles River watershed have issued **Turf Field Statements**. She thought that the SuAsCo, being larger than both of those, should also issue a statement. She suggested that the RSC work on wording for that at the March meeting.

7:51 pm Mr. Sciacca said that in 2019 Verizon proposed installing a cell tower near the Stone Bridge in Wayland. There was a lot of community pushback and Verizon did not pursue the project. He recently saw a new Verizon notice announcing that a comment period is open regarding the potential construction of a 127-foot cell tower in Wayland. He would like the RSC to comment that no tower should be visible above the trees near the Sudbury River. Ms. Lord said that she had looked at the notice and it was not clear to her where the RSC should send its comments. Mr. Sciacca said that he would investigate that issue.

### **Community and Partner Updates**

7:58 pm Mr. Chick said that he, the Director of Planning and Community Development and Framingham's Conservation Agent recently gave a presentation to Framingham's Community Preservation Committee on the design of the middle section of the Carol Getchell Trail boardwalk. The presentation was well received. He thinks they are in a good position for funding, design and permitting. There will be a public presentation in March and then one to the City Council for their approval. The Mass Trails grant for \$100,000 that Framingham submitted last month acquired support from the Soloman Foundation and is moving ahead. Construction has begun on the North and South ends of the boardwalk.

8:00 pm Mr. Sciacca said that he will try to locate drainage ditches in the marsh between Wayland's turf field and the river. He remembers seeing one years ago that ran from the end of the field almost straight to the river. Linda Hansen and Stephanie Koch did not see that ditch during their visit. He will wait until the snow is gone and the vegetation is still low.

8:02 pm Ms. Hempel wondered if there could be an opportunity to do some SuAsCo branding at the April 19<sup>th</sup> Concord parade which is expected to draw about 100,000 people. Ms. Brown said that the RSC had nothing

planned for that day but is working on a lantern-lit evening paddle on the summer solstice. She said that she would look into whether the RSC could have a booth for the April 19<sup>th</sup> celebration.

8:06 pm Ms. Henderson said the project to improve a Billerica parking lot near the Concord River has seen an increase in volunteers who are signing USFWS Volunteer Service Agreements. The Yankee Doodle multi-use path has been slightly delayed since the section that is closest to the river must be rerouted because indigenous artifacts have been found there. It is now a Phase One and Phase Two project. The Talbot Mill Dam removal project is before the Billerica Conservation Commission. There will be a Section 106 visit at the Canal Museum.

8:09 pm Mr. Brown said that many questions about the dam removal have come up throughout Billerica's first two Conservation Commission meetings. There is a Historical Commission vote in the future. The permitting process will continue into the summer.

### **Draft FY2026 Budget and Workplan**

8:11 pm Ms. Lord said that the federal government is running on a Continuing Resolution until March 14<sup>th</sup>. She said the assumption is that the RSC will receive flat funding with the possibility of some cuts. She thought the Council should think about where we will make cuts if they are needed.

Ms. Lord said that once the RSC approves its **FY2026 Budget and Work Plan** it will be shared with the NPS financial assistance team. That team is not familiar with our program so we need to provide it with background information. She displayed our proposed FY2026 Budget and Workplan document. SVT takes a lower-than-standard 5% of our total budget for their services as our fiscal agent. Our total budget is \$210,000. Our line items include \$540 for annual website maintenance and administration and \$250 for a Mass Rivers Alliance yearly membership. RSC Internal Projects plus Education and Outreach & Recreation is \$30,000; General Science and Stewardship is \$8,000 and includes our Dragonfly Mercury Project and some funds that are set aside in case another study comes up. Outreach and Education Projects is \$6,000; Community Grants total \$36,226 and Major Partner Grants total \$117,920. Ms. Lord said that historically the Wild and Scenic programs have had bipartisan support and she hoped that continues.

8:20 pm Ms. Lord referred to five **2025-2026 Partner Grant Proposals** which had been shared through email. The total for the proposals received was \$117,920. They included OARS (\$40,000 for Science and Stakeholder Engagement for Ecological Restoration), SuAsCo Cisma (\$8,940 for Website Maintenance and Cisma Small Grants), Sudbury Valley Trustees (\$19,950 for Land Protection & Stewardship in the SuAsCo Watershed), Mass Audubon (\$35,000 for Waterways; Metro West RiverSchools Program), and Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust (\$14,030 for Ecological Restoration for All). She shared a chart on FY2025 funding and compared that with the Partners' FY2026 funding requests. She noted that SVT and Mass Audubon were asking for roughly the same amount as last year while the other three organizations are asking for more.

8:22 pm. A discussion followed as Council members commented on the content and value of each proposal.

8:40 pm Ms. Lord said that any decisions about Partner grant funding would have to wait until the March meeting when we have our final budget numbers. She said there is a chance we will not have that final budget number even in March. She added that she would be happy to reach out to the applicants. She will let them know why we cannot give them our decisions now and that we hope to make those decisions at our March meeting when we have more information and final budget numbers. She didn't think this would impact their work plans because their work wouldn't start until August or September.

8:48 pm Ms. Hempel motioned to adjourn, Mr. Chick seconded and Ms. Henderson declared the meeting adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan