

Minutes for February 27, 2024

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

RSC Representatives absent: Ron Chick (Framingham)

Welcome and January Meeting Minutes

7:03 pm Ms. Field-Juma opened the meeting. She introduced Matt Brown as the new Executive Director at OARS. Ms. Henderson motioned to accept the January Minutes as presented, Ms. Hempel seconded and the motion carried 12-0.

River Ambassador Update

7:08 pm Ms. Brown said that the 40B development proposal for 60 affordable one-bedroom units in Wayland at St. Anne's Village is making its way through the Town's approval process. The development will border a stream connected to a section of the Sudbury River which flows above 9 acres of undeveloped wetlands. Mr. Sciacca said that the stream flows from the river and shouldn't be an issue for river water quality. Ms. Brown said that Mass DEP has written a draft report on the fish sampling they did in September as part of the 5-Year Nyanza Sudbury River Mercury Update. She thinks the results should be publicly available in April. She attended the February 8th Task Force meeting on Warner's Pond dam. It was decided at that meeting that the Committee Report which will eventually be sent to the Concord NRC must first be approved by 75% of the Committee. The Friends of Warner's Pond held a meeting on the history of West Concord. Andrew Coe, an accomplished archeologist, spoke about his work and findings at various Concord sites including the McGrath farm on the Assabet. Ms. Brown and Ms. Lord were invited to listen in to the first "GMNWR's Concord River Impoundments Structured Decision-Making Workshop." Ms. Koch said that the staff is working on common objectives for the primary biological resources that they are most concerned about, they are looking at the resources that the river impoundments can make the greatest contribution towards, and will collectively decide on strategies that can be implemented soon. The process includes 3 meetings leading to the workshop itself. She said it is very exciting to be able to finally focus on this. Ms. Brown has submitted applications for a RSC booth at the first two Billerica and Framingham Farmer's Markets this Spring and also plans to attend the Billerica and Carlisle Farmers Markets. She listened to DOT meetings concerning possible improvements to Route 2. There were no discussions concerning the Sudbury or Assabet Rivers in those meetings. She believes that the closing of MCI Concord will be discussed at a future DOT meeting. Mr. Simms said that Concord might take ownership of MCI's wastewater treatment facility at some point in the future. He thought the plant would probably require upgrades. Ms. Field-Juma said that OARS sent a letter to state legislators stating that OARS has worked long and hard on the discharge limits from that plant and would like to be kept informed about discussions concerning future ownership. She also said that the plant has a high-level CoMag System for removing phosphorus.

Warner's Pond Dam Subcommittee Update

7:30 pm Ms. Hempel reported on the Warner's Pond Subcommittee activities over the past month. She interviewed Paul Kirshen, a longtime environmentalist who has taught at Tufts and MIT, about the dam's removal for a Q&A article in The Concord Bridge. He said that every piece of data suggests that Concord will

see much more flooding and that Warner's Pond dam will breach in the future. He thinks that Concord should be concerned with mitigation and not preservation of the dam. He spoke a great deal about the purifying effects of the marshland which will be created. The RSC's Warner's Pond Subcommittee will begin vetting the 7 videographer companies they found for the educational video that the Subcommittee will create. They have also compiled a list of about 12 West Concord organizations to whom they will give presentations. They plan to speak to organizations such as the Council on Aging and various environmental groups. Their message will be "restoring Nashoba Brook." The Subcommittee is also considering creating a Fact Sheet.

Other/Updates

Talbot Mills Dam Removal

7:55 pm Ms. Field-Juma said that the Environmental Impact Report for the Talbot Mills Dam removal was filed with NEPA. It includes the 75% Design Plan and extensive response to comments. Public comments are due by March 25th. The historic consultation process under the National Historic Preservation Act will start in March. It will include NOAA, the Mass Historical Commission, and local groups like the Billerica Historical Society. They will address historical concerns which will be memorialized in a Memo of Understanding. Mr. Sciacca said he thought the one valid argument against the Talbot Mills Dam removal was the impact on historical resources but thought objections could be mitigated with actions like retaining artifacts of the site. Mr. Brown agreed. Mr. Brown added that the historical consultation group is also trying to find a Native American representative because much of the history which is raising concerns is only from the industrial revolution and forward. Mr. Sciacca noted that while the dam removal will destroy the recent history there is 10,000 years of history before that which should be recognized. Ms. Henderson said that the dam removal would actually be restoring history.

Wayland Turf Field

8:03 pm Mr. Sciacca said that 3 years ago the Wayland artificial turf field between the Sudbury River and the high school overflowed after heavy rains. Crumb rubber littered the field and rubber pellets entered the Sudbury River. Some effort was made by the Town to clean up the area, yet the field and drainage swales are currently full of crumb rubber even though the Conservation Commission issued enforcement orders for the clean-up. Mr. Sciacca asked Ms. Koch if the USFWS could once again contact the Town about cleaning up this area. Ms. Koch said she would look into finding the best staff member to reach out to Wayland.

RSC Officer Elections

8:09 pm Ms. Slugg announced that the RSC Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer positions are all being vacated. Ms. Field-Juma is leaving OARS. Mr. Fadden would someone else to take on the Treasurer position. Ms. Slugg is moving away from Sudbury. Ms. Slugg asked the Council representatives to consider who among them will fill those roles. She said that officer elections would be added to the March meeting agenda.

2024-2025 Draft Budget and Workplan

8:12pm Ms. Lord said that the RSC's FY2025 starts in August 2024. The actual funding level for FY2025 is not known because the government is operating under a Continuing Resolution until March 8th. Wild & Scenic River staff have been told to expect flat funding, or perhaps a slight decrease. She shared a slide for a \$200,000 draft budget based on the past year's expenses. Line items included financial administration (\$9,524), website maintenance (\$540), Mass Rivers Alliance membership (\$250), a storage locker fee (\$500), the River Ambassador Program (\$35,000), Watershed Studies projects including the Dragonfly Mercury Project (\$6,000), Riverfest (\$12,500), Community Grants (\$34,000), and Partner Grants (TBD).

Partner Grant Review

8:21 pm Ms. Lord asked if there were any budget questions before the Council moved on to a discussion about distributing Partner grant money. Several representatives said they had mistakenly overlooked the Partner proposals when they were circulated by email and therefore had not yet read them. There was general agreement to move the conversation about Partner grant funding to Friday, March 1st. Ms. Lord said that the

total amount requested by RSC's Partners is about \$112,000 while the RSC has only reserved about \$100,000 for those grants.

Ms. Slugg said that she would like all members to consider if every item in every Partner grant is worth funding. The Council could decide not to fund some projects in some Partner proposals. Those savings could be transferred to Community Grants. In FY2024 the submitted Community Grant proposals totaled \$80,000. FY2025 Community Grants currently are only budgeted for \$34,000.

8:38pm Ms. Henderson motioned to adjourn; Ms. Hempel seconded. The motion passed 12-0.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan