The Sudbury, Assabet and Concord
WILD & SCENIC
River Stewardship Council
sudbury-assabet-concord.org

SuAsCo RSC Minutes for March 24, 2026

RSC Representatives present: Marlies Henderson, Chair (Billerica), Andrew Petit de Mange (NPS), Ron Chick (Framingham), Dan Cook (Carlisle), Jonathan DeKock (Carlisle-Alt), Christine Dugan (Lincoln-Alt), Bill Fadden (Framingham-Alt), Caitlin Fitzgerald (OARS), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Laura Mattei (SVT), Brian Murphy (Bedford), Ross Tucker (Lincoln), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), Angela Taveira-Dick (Bedford-Alt),
Absent: Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt), John Drobinski (Sudbury), Vacant (Commonwealth)
Also attending: Ellie Sablak, Jane Calvin (Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust)

Welcome and February Meeting Minutes
7:00 pm Ms. Henderson opened the meeting. She asked if there were any corrections to the February Minutes. A discussion followed concerning an omission in the draft budget discussion.

7:19 pm Ms. Mattei moved to amend the February Minutes to reflect that between 7:55 p.m. and 8:02 p.m., $107,000 in carryover funds from previous years was agreed to be added to the 2026–2027 draft budget, Mr. Chick seconded and the motion passed 10-0.

Budget Discussion for October 2026-September 2027
7:20 pm Mr. Petit de Mange shared the detailed FY 2027 Budget and Workplan which he prepared. It included a table of requests made by the RSC's major Partners. He reminded the Council that during our February meeting the line items in our annual budget were briefly discussed and that the dollar amounts for our Partner grants were not listed. Usually those grants are about half of our budget but that will change this year. Ms. Mattei spoke about SVT's 2026-2027 grant request. She said that she had not realized that the Partner grants would be limited to what was previously given, that in March the RSC agreed that our $107,000 in carryover funds needed to be spent by the end of FY27, and that she had included two project ideas from SVT's steering committee which she thought would fit with the RSC.

7:23 pm Mr. Petit de Mange said the budget that would be submitted includes a $220,000 base allocation and $15,000 for invasive plant work in the Carol Getchell Trail area, which was requested by Mr. Chick. The result is a total of $235,000 reflected in the next modification to the cooperative agreement. He explained that allocation amounts for Partner organizations may vary from year to year, provided overall budget limits are met. One option would be to meet additional funding requests by allocating portions of the previously identified $107,000 in carryover funds, with any remaining requests to be funded from that balance.

7:25 pm Ms. Henderson asked if there were questions for Jane Calvin. Mr. Cook asked Ms. Calvin about the new fish ladder. She said that there is no funding yet. Ms. Henderson asked her about a planned trail connection near Billerica. Ms. Hempel complemented Ms. Calvin on LP&CT's budget and was happy to see that $10,200 of the $14,170 of its proposal was for staff.

7:36 pm Ms. Henderson asked if anyone had questions for OARS. Ms. Mattei asked if there were any changes from last year's proposal. Caitlin Fitzgerald said that it was very similar. Ms. Henderson noted that the cost of food was included. Mr. Petit de Mange explained that unfortunately the RSC cannot use federal funding for food.

7:40 pm Mr. Petit de Mange thought that Audubon's proposal was similar to past years and that its river program was very strong.

7:41 pm Ms. Mattei said that SVT was requesting about $4,000 more for land protection because of its work with the MetroWest Conservation Alliance and greater engagement in community meetings with local land trusts and municipalities to support landowner outreach and land protection projects. It is requesting $20,000 for a new nature play area which is being designed for Wolbach Farm. Mr. Petit de Mange asked if that $20,000 would be used for the design or just construction. She replied that it would be used for both.

7:49 pm Ms. Mattei spoke about CISMA. Its key priorities are to improve tracking of invasive plant control projects and to maintain better data on methods, outcomes, and long-term success. CISMA is requesting funding for an intern to update project information on the website, gather additional data from partners, and help keep the site more current. This effort is tied directly to projects funded through the RSC's small grants program. CISMA is requesting an increase in small grants funding from the usual $7,000–$8,000 to $10,000.

7:51 pm Mr. Cook asked how CISMA would monitor plant control projects. Ms. Mattei said that each project partner tracks their own results by looking at vegetation cover, invasive species reduction, and native plant survival rates.

7:58 pm Ms. Henderson asked Mr. Petit de Mange if it would be possible to fund all the Partner proposals. He returned to the FY27 Budget. He said that the Partner requests total $146,340, while the current fiscal year (October 2025–September 2026) budget has $17,920 remaining, with an additional $107,000 potentially available from carry-over funds. He said he could prepare a revised table showing how funding could be allocated across both the current budget and carry-over to cover the full request, but that tonight's vote would be on the Partner proposals as presented.

8:02 pm Partner representatives stepped away from the meeting so that the RSC could discuss next steps and move toward a vote.

8: 06 pm Ms. Hempel asked if using carryover funds would reduce resources available to future grantees. Mr. Petit de Mange said it would not. The program has an obligation to spend down approximately $550,000–$600,000 within the next 18 months.

8:07 pm Ms. Hempel moved to fund the slate of grant requests as presented, opening the floor for discussion.

8:08 pm Mr. Murphy expressed support for the SVT nature playground in principle but questioned funding construction for a project not yet fully designed, suggesting funding be limited to completed design work and clearly defined deliverables. Ms. Henderson asked whether this could be addressed through an MOU. Mr. Petit de Mange replied that conditions could be incorporated into the MOU at acceptance, though RSC payments are only made upon receipt of documentation for completed work. He added that future applications would benefit from more complete design documentation upfront.

Budget Votes
8:19 pm Ms. Hempel moved to fund the full slate of grant requests as presented for the amount of $146,340, Mr. Petit de Mange seconded. The motion passed 9-0 with one abstention.

8:20 pm Mr. Tucker moved that the difference between the available annual budget of $117,920 and the total requested amount of $146,340, which amounts to $28,420, be drawn from available carryover funds subject to any procedural requirements to be handled by Mr. Petit de Mange, Ms. Henderson seconded and the motion passed 9-0 with one abstention.

River Ambassador Report
8:22 pm Mr. Petit de Mange suggested that the River Ambassador report be shared electronically since Ms. Brown was absent. The consensus was that Ms. Brown would include it with next month's presentation.

Community Updates
8:23 pm Ms. Henderson provided an update on the Talbot dam removal, which is currently in Superior Court. The Historic District Commission has been served. The Select Board voted in November 2025 that the Historic Districts Commission does not have access to Town Counsel. The next steps are still to be determined.

8:25 pm Ms. Henderson presented the River Ambassador contract renewal on behalf of Elissa Brown. Ms. Brown requested that the hourly rate increase to $29.40 per hour. The hours will range from 10-30 per week. The Council expressed strong support for Ms. Brown's work. Mr. Sciacca noted that she is likely working more hours than she bills. Mr. Chick said that she is certainly underpaid. Ms. Henderson agreed to follow up with Ms. Brown about which components of the contract may be shared with the full RSC. Modifications to her responsibilities and goals will be discussed at the next meeting.

8:27 pm The Council discussed the condition of river crossing signage across the eight communities in the Wild and Scenic corridor. Ms. Henderson noted that community representatives should take stock of signage in their areas and report on whether signs are faded or in good condition. She agreed to distribute a spreadsheet for members to record their observations. This item will be placed on the next meeting agenda.

8:33 pm Ms. Henderson reported that Brian Kelder, the new NOAA contact replacing Eric Hutchins, has circulated a draft Section 106 review about historic mitigation relative to the impact of dam removal. The Section 106 process is intended to document current conditions before a dam is removed. Billerica's Historic Districts Commission had previously declined to participate, stating that the dam removal was not imminent, but the process has now resumed.

8:36 pm Mr. Chick reported that Framingham's Community Preservation Committee voted unanimously to approve an additional $157,000 for construction of the middle section of the Getchell Trail boardwalk. This will connect both ends. A separate $100,000 grant from MassTrails was also awarded, bringing total construction funding to $257,000. Design and permitting, funded in a previous grant cycle, is expected to be completed by early summer. All necessary funding is now in place.

8:38 pm Ms. Hempel reported that the Warner's Pond adaptive management group, consisting of Dan Stapleton, Elissa Brown and Rose Kaforski, has met twice. The group is working through existing data and prior recommendations to develop a pond management plan. The goal is to put aggressive measures in place in an attempt to save the pond, with a reassessment expected after three to five years to evaluate whether those measures are succeeding.

8:40 pm Ms. Henderson said that Mr. Petit de Mange drafted a letter in support of the Jack Straw Brook Culvert project and that it was well received.

8:41 pm Ms. Henderson noted that the next RSC meeting will be held on April 28. Ms. Hempel suggested an item for that agenda. She thought that by January 2027 the RSC could have an advertising plan to announce its community grants. She would like to see actual advertisements and Letters to the Editor. She suggested that we look at the main publication of record in each town and post an advertisement in January each year.

8:43 pm Ms. Henderson said that clarifying the Treasurer position would be added to a future agenda. At the April meeting she would like to bring to a vote the names of any RSC members who have not been formally voted in. She reminded the Council that officer elections are required in May under the bylaws. She expected that interested parties would be identified in April so a formal vote could take place in May.

8:47 pm Ms. Henderson adjourned the meeting.