

SuAsCo RSC Minutes for April 29, 2025

RSC Representatives present: Marlies Henderson, Chair (Billerica), Emma Lord (NPS), Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Matt Brown (OARS), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Laura Mattei (SVT), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt)

RSC Representatives absent: Ron Chick (Framingham), Dan Cook (Carlisle), John Drobinski (Sudbury), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Stephanie Koch (USFWS),

Guest: Brian Murphy

Welcome

7:04 pm Ms. Henderson opened the meeting. Mr. Hammond said that he was stepping down as the Bedford Representative after nearly 20 years on the RSC. He would like to be Bedford's Alternate Representative.

7:07 pm Ms. Henderson said that The Talbot Mills project is on the agenda for the Billerica Conservation Commission's next meeting. The MA DEP Section 401 Water Quality Certification has been issued.

NPS Update on Budget and Workplan

7:11 pm Ms. Lord reminded the RSC that it approved its FY26 Budget and Workplan last month when we were expecting flat funding at \$210,000. The final paperwork has not been submitted because we still don't have our final budget numbers. Ms. Lord let our five Partners know that the RSC had voted to fully fund their grant proposals. She said that we are in a holding pattern until we receive final budget numbers from the NPS.

River Ambassador Report

Ms. Brown said that last month she worked with OARS staff on their Strategic Plan Update. She attended OARS' Wild and Scenic Film Festival. Ms. Henderson did an excellent job as the festival's emcee. Mr. Brown was great at explaining OARS' upcoming activities. She spent the morning of April 19th with Ms. Henderson, Julia Khorana and others at the Old North Bridge during the celebration for Concord 250. They attended so that they could be of assistance to any paddlers in the river at the event. Luckily no assistance was needed.

She visited the Carlisle and Bedford boat launches to pick up trash, restock the kiosks with river maps, and try to get the aquatic hitchhiker signs posted. She visited Sherman's Bridge and noticed that milfoil fragments and curly pond weed have appeared in the river. She had a tabling event at Carlisle's Route to Sustainability event where she met lots of people interested in the WSR. She and Mr. Brown attended an MCA Conservation Alliance meeting on developing an Action Plan. She attended a meeting organized by OARS and SVT where State Senators Eldridge and Hogan and State Representatives Carmen Gentile and Simon Cataldo talked about their Bills. Wade Blackman from Katherine Clark's office spoke about the federal perspective. They attended a regulator meeting organized by Mass Rivers. Stephanie Cooper (Under Secretary for the Environment), Bonnie Heipel (Commissioner for Mass DEP), and Tim O'Shea (Commissioner of Fish and Game) spoke about their programs and priorities. They were upbeat and positive about Massachusetts continuing to be a leader in the environmental and environmental justice field.

7:20 pm Ms. Brown looked at items before Sudbury's Conservation Commission and Planning Board. She noted that the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail will cross Hop Brook. When completed, the Mass Central Rail Trail from the Sudbury Substation to the Assabet River Rail Trail will go through a lot of marshes and wetlands. She thought that more people will become aware of the town's hydrographic features when they can view them

from the new trails. Ms. Brown noted that remediation for the turf field at Wayland High will be a topic at Wayland's next Town Meeting.

7:22 pm Mr. Sciacca said that the Selects passed over the Town Meeting Article requesting money to work on the turf field. He learned that was because their consultant had sent people to clean the swale. The team found some crumb rubber and cleaned what they could. They decided it would do more damage than good to take any more crumb rubber out. The Selects then considered the project completed, which is why the money was not voted on. The Article to ban second generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) passed as a "sense of the Town" after there appeared to be a conflict with the current bylaw.

7:27 pm Ms. Brown said that there was a public forum about Warner's Pond a few weeks ago. She and Ms. Hempel submitted comments on behalf of the RSC. Concord's Natural Resources Commission will review all comments and make a recommendation to the Select Board. Ms. Brown, Ms. Lord, and Ms. Henderson have drafted comments for the MCI-Concord Advisory Board to let them know of the RSC's interest in public access for a water-based recreation program and its concerns about the wastewater treatment plant. The Town would like to take over the plant. She advised that the Council track the permitting efforts to be sure discharge limits are within the capacity of the Assabet River. Concord's Select Board accepted a Conservation Restriction along the river for six of the seven acres recently acquired by Assabet River Bluff and other organizations.

7:30 pm Ms. Brown said that Prof. Thorson will speak on May 3rd at the Goodwin Forum in Concord. He found about 300 references to the Concord River in Thoreau's journals. Using those entries he has divided the river into 10 river seasons. Those seasons will be the theme of his talk. Julia Khorana is working with multiple organizations for a summer solstice paddle in Concord. It might be an evening lantern paddle.

March Meeting Minutes

7:32 pm Ms. Henderson asked for a motion to vote on the March 25th Minutes. Mr. Sciacca motioned to accept the Minutes as amended, Mr. Brown seconded. The motion passed 8-0 with one abstention.

Environmental Topics

7:33 pm Ms. Henderson asked if there were any corrections to the MCI-Concord letter written primarily by Ms. Lord and Ms. Brown. There were none. Ms. Mattei motioned to send the MCI-Concord comment letter on April 26th, it was seconded by Mr. Sciacca and passed 9-0.

7:34 pm Mr. Sciacca said that Wayland received a request for comments from Verizon concerning the possibility of building a cell tower. Town staff do not know anything about the project. Verizon had a permit in 2019 but it expired. Ms. Lord said that an environmental consulting firm working on the project reached out to her, seeking comments or approval from the NPS rather than the RSC. When she asked about a visual impact survey and balloon tests they said they would reach out to their cultural resources team. If the project goes to the Town for permitting then that would be an opportunity for the RSC to comment.

Updates and Other

7:39 pm Ms. Henderson organized a cleanup of the Route 4 parking lot for the "Clean Up Green Up" day in Billerica. The effort was in collaboration with Friends of Woodlands and Waters. Billerica will have two separate warrant articles on banning SGARs at their May Town Meeting. One is for a Home Rule petition. She thinks Billerica needs to petition the state to get a town-wide ban. The other warrant article is for a ban at municipal buildings.

7:51 pm Ms. Mattei said that the Assabet Market Cop-op in Maynard now has a landscaper. It has also ordered plants to complete the riverside restoration they outlined in their Community Grant proposal.

7:54 pm Mr. Brown said that OARS is sponsoring its first ever Concord River Race on May 4th. They have had a flurry of signups. There will also be an 86-mile river challenge during this season. He is working with one person who would like to paddle all 86 miles in two days. The TerraCorps have ceased to exist due to some Executive Orders. OARS will not have its TerraCorps staff members after May 10th. OARS is looking for ways

to keep them so they can do the work they have been preparing to do for recreation, education, the River Rats paddles and water-wise workshops. OARS sent out an appeal to membership and hopes to get the money it needs to support these programs. The appeal includes a link to write to your legislators.

7:58 pm Ms. Henderson asked Mr. Fadden if he knew anything about the Land Conservation Manager's position being cut in Framingham. He did not, he had only heard that the Town is looking to fill two summer positions but they are not supervisory roles.

7:59 pm Mr. Sciacca motioned to adjourn, Ms. Mattei seconded and the motion passed 9-0.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan

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