

### Minutes for March 28, 2023

**RSC Representatives present:** Anne Slugg, Chair (Sudbury), Emma Lord (NPS), Sam Corbin (SVT), Christine Dugan (Lincoln-Alt), Bill Fadden (Framingham-Alt), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Marlies Henderson (Billerica), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Tom Sciacca (Wayland)

**RSC Representatives absent:** Ron Chick (Framingham), Dan Cook (Carlisle), Trek Reef (Billerica-Alt), Frank Richichi (Bedford-Alt), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt)

7:02 pm Ms. Field-Juma opened the meeting. She asked if there were any edits to the February Minutes. There were none. Mr. Sciacca motioned to accept the Minutes as circulated, Ms. Koch seconded, and the Minutes were approved 7-0 with 2 abstentions.

#### Community Grant Approval

7:07 pm Ms. Field-Juma reported on speaking about the SuAsCo at the Concord Conservatory of Music's "Music and Water" concert which was partially funded by a RSC Community Grant. Roughly 75 people attended. The musicians were very talented. One musical selection was a rarely heard piece about glaciers melting that had been composed for the State Department on the occasion of President Obama's visit to Alaska. It was accompanied by a slide show. There was a lot of interest in RSC promotional materials which were left on a table. Ms. Lord thought there could be room for future collaboration and said that she would proceed with reimbursement to the Conservatory.

#### Riverfest Series Planning and River Ambassador Updates

7:15 pm Ms. Lord said that Elissa Brown, former RSC Representative from Concord, will begin as Lead River Ambassador in one week. Ms. Lord explained that that 3 NPS Fellows, based in Philadelphia, Springfield, and Concord, NH will be working on programmatic projects this year. It is likely they will be able to add some additional capacity for the SuAsCo. Ms. Brown will work with Ms. Lord and Julia Khorana on Riverfest planning. Ms. Lord said that Riverfest events will probably take place over July and August. There should be at least one paddle and one guided walk or hike each week. Other events are being considered. The Riverfest working group is focused on setting an event schedule and on advertising and promoting events. Ms. Lord will meet with Ms. Khorana again to finalize specific dates and times.

Ms. Koch wondered when events needed to be finalized in order to have them advertised. Ms. Lord said that would be the beginning of June at the latest. Mr. Sciacca commented that the fishing events at Great Meadows are always popular, especially with children. Ms. Koch agreed. She said that the law enforcement personnel and the state fishing instructors who attend are wonderful. She will pass on Mr. Sciacca's comments to the Visitor Services staff who would be the ones to plan a fishing event. Ms. Koch said that there are state fishing instructors she may be able to contact directly.

Ms. Lord said the working group is trying to schedule several children's events close together. Ms. Hempel said that she was considering leading a bird walk with Jeff Collins at October Farm in Concord which could also include asking Christa Collins to participate in a walk at nearby Brewster Woods. She thought she might be able to organize a children's art project in town with Margot Kimball. Ms. Slugg said that the RSC has money set aside which could possibly be used to pay for art supplies for that project. Ms. Field-Juma said that potentially the new owners of the South Bridge Boat House could offer reduced boat rental rates for a Riverfest event. Ms. Lord said that one idea being considered is setting aside

some money for boat rentals at the boat house and offering week night paddles so that people who don't own boats could get out on the water. Mr. Sciacca liked the idea of making use of the boathouse's pontoon boat, which would be good for people who aren't mobile. Ms. Lord said that the pontoon boat was facing expensive maintenance issues last season. She said the RSC could get an update on that.

### **State Agency Vacancies on the RSC**

7:37 pm Ms. Slugg brought up the Council's two state vacancies which were briefly discussed at the February meeting. She and Ms. Lord wanted to know if there were particular agencies that the Council wanted to have on the RSC. Past agencies that had been on the Council included staff from DEP and what is now the Division of Ecological Restoration. Ms. Field-Juma said that previous state representatives were all from different departments within the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). She thought that we could consider asking for a DCR representative. Mr. Sciacca thought it was most important to have someone who was interested in rivers. Ms. Corbin said that the lead Forest and Park Supervisor of Ashland and Hopkinton State Park does water quality sampling. She thought that he might be interested in joining the Council. Mr. Fadden said that we could reach out directly to the EEA Secretary to tell her that we have been unable to find a state volunteer to join the Council and ask if she could designate someone. Ms. Koch said that there is a USFWS staff member who is interested in aquatic connectivity/watershed issues. She offered to ask him if could think of someone who could be a good match for the Council.

### **Updates and Other Items**

7:48 pm Ms. Slugg said that the Council submitted a letter on the RSC's concerns about the Mass Central Rail Trail expansion. She asked if anyone who attended the MCRT meeting wanted to speak about it. Ms. Koch said that she reached out to the state. She learned that there have been no applications to review or analyze just yet. She said there should be many upcoming opportunities to comment. Mr. Sciacca said he had submitted written comments about the need for educational signage near the marsh and brought up the issue of flooding in that area. A Wayland Select arranged a meeting for Mr. Sciacca to discuss his concerns with the new Town Manager and Wayland's state Senator Jamie Eldridge. Mr. Sciacca has also spoken to state Representative Carmine Gentile about these issues.

### **May 10<sup>th</sup> Wayland Site Walk with AMC**

7:54 pm Ms. Slugg said that there will be a Wayland site walk with the AMC on May 10<sup>th</sup> to look at the new progressive trail they would like to build at the Cow Common Conservation Area. She said that a few RSC representatives wanted to see the trail. Ms. Slugg said that Linda Hansen, Wayland's Conservation Agent, will be attending.

### **Talbot Mill Dam**

7:56 pm Ms. Slugg introduced the topic of the Talbot Mill Dam removal. Ms. Field-Juma said there should be a MEPA filing in early May. A consultant is preparing the required plans and data collection. A "Frequently Asked Questions" sheet on Talbot Mill Dam issues is being translated into 4 languages. Ms. Field-Juma will speak to the Billerica Planning Board, for which Ms. Henderson is Chair. Ms. Henderson said those meetings are publicly broadcast and will be helpful in starting a discussion in Billerica. A presentation for the Conservation Commission is also scheduled. It is early enough in the process to collect data about whatever the Commissioners concerns are. The Billerica Select Board canceled a planned presentation because members believed they did not need any further information. Presentations about the dam removal will be held informally in various community settings, such as churches, as a way to hear residents' questions and concerns. There is a vocal set of residents opposed to the dam removal who are mainly seeking delay. Mr. Sciacca asked if people are concerned about water intake. Ms. Field-Juma said some people are, despite evidence to the contrary. A study on intake has shown that there wouldn't be a significant impact. Two sets of the Town's consultants reviewed the study and agreed with it, and yet concerns about water intake is the main reason for residents' opposition to the dam removal. Ms. Field-Juma said that no one in Billerica wants the responsibility of caring for the dam because it needs expensive repairs and carries liability issues. The owner would like the dam removed. Ms. Field-Juma thinks that some residents will speak in favor of removal when MEPA comments are requested. Mr. Fadden said this situation seems similar to the underground transmission line debate in Sudbury where the town itself objected to the plan at first,

then once all the science was presented and the proper permits were granted, the plan was accepted. Recently Mr. Hammond was a guest speaker at the Billerica Rotary Club. Some members are influential in town. He offered to take Ms. Field-Juma there as a guest speaker. She thought that would be helpful. Ms. Henderson said that some Billerica residents are afraid that once the dam is removed, water flowing from the Iron Horse Park Superfund site will somehow flow in reverse, and being located near the mill pond, will no longer enter the Shawsheen River but will enter the Concord River instead. Ms. Henderson said that water from Iron Horse Park flows into Content Brook and Content Brook flows into the Shawsheen. Ms. Field-Juma said that a study is being prepared to show what kind of influence the dam removal will have on water flowing from Iron Horse Park. In answer to a question about the composition of the coalition which is addressing Billerica residents and providing studies, Ms. Field-Juma said that they refer to themselves as partners. The working group is made up of proponents of the dam removal and includes NOAA, the dam owner, DER, Mass Wildlife, the Division of Marine Fisheries, Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust, the Merrimack River Watershed Council, and Trout Unlimited. A discussion followed on what the river will look like after dam removal. There will be some rock from the dam remaining. People will be able to visualize where the dam was. There will be a waterfall and rushing water.

8:28 pm Ms. Henderson motioned to adjourn, Ms. Slugg seconded and the motion passed 11-0.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan