



## Minutes for the June 29, 2021 Meeting

**RSC Representatives present:** Emma Lord (NPS), Ron Chick (Framingham-Alt), Christine Dugan (Lincoln-Alt), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Marlies Henderson (Billerica), Linh Phu (USFWS), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), Trek Reef (Billerica-Alt).

**RSC Representatives absent:** Mary Antes (Wayland-Alt), Amber Carr (SVT), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Joseph Piantedosi (Bedford-Alt), Anne Slugg, Chair (Sudbury), David Witherbee (Concord).

### 7:06 pm **Minutes**

Ms. Field-Juma opened the meeting. Ms. Henderson moved to accept the May minutes. Ms. Lord seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

### 7:08 pm **Riverfest Wrap Up**

Ms. Lord gave a Riverfest update. Ms. Henderson's walk focusing on Henry David Thoreau while exploring extant portions of the Middlesex Canal was well attended with about 40 participants. Ms. Henderson said there was some high water along the trail in Chelmsford which made that part of the walk challenging. Mr. Chick reported good attendance at the 2 paddles he led. OARS had 16 children at its fishing lesson and perhaps 15 people at its bike ride which included a tour of the Great Meadows refuge with a story map provided by USFWS staff. One of Peter Alden's bird walks had 23 participants and the other had 8 participants. Four events were held at the Old Manse on Sunday, including a snake presentation and the Encore Dance Ensemble. Ms. Lord said these events were the first events held at the Old Manse since the start of the pandemic. Mr. Sciacca said it was understandable that attendance was lower than average at some events since restricted access to many municipal buildings limited our publicity efforts.

### 7:15 pm **FY22 Internal Projects: River Ambassadors**

Ms. Lord spoke about the job description for two part-time River Ambassadors who will be hired in order to provide a presence on and around the SuAsCo WSR and to promote stewardship and understanding of local riverine resources. The job description was created by a small group of RSC members.

A discussion followed on the merits of hiring two part-time people instead of one full-time staff person. Ms. Lord thought that having RSC personnel at two river access points would increase safety and communication, that hiring two River Ambassadors would increase the chance of one of them returning the next year, and would double the amount of feedback from the public. Ms. Field-Juma said that working in a team is an added benefit and having 2 Ambassadors would increase flexibility of scheduling.

Ms. Phu noted that if we train two people for 12 weeks they have just gotten comfortable with the job and then they leave whereas if you hire one person for 24 weeks you give them more benefits and get more of a return on the training. She said that justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion candidates can rarely take part-time work because they need a full-time salary and often do not have their own transportation as is required in our job description.

The ideas of posting the position at a college or university and potentially finding a faculty member to work with the hired students were discussed. Ms. Phu recommended contacting Framingham State, Worcester Polytech, UMass Lowell, and the University of Connecticut about finding an interested faculty member. She thought that both the Hispanic Middlesex Community College grant office and the Outdoor Afro Boston office would be good places to post these positions. She recommended a fall posting in order to ensure a good lead time and posting the position on our partners' websites. Mr. Sciacca thought some RSC members might like to volunteer along the river as well and recommended having the River Ambassadors earn a MOCC (Motorboat Operator Instructor Certificate). The MOCC also offers a certificate for non-motorboat instruction. Ms. Phu recommended a link for paddling instruction: <https://www.americancanoe.org/page/PSF>. She wondered if we might eventually post similar positions from other groups and organizations on our website in addition to our own, and in that way become a resource for local conservation opportunities.

#### 7:50 pm **Other Updates**

##### Meeting with MWRA

Ms. Lord said there is no date set yet for a meeting between the RSC and the MWRA. When it does occur, it will include a presentation by 3 or 4 MWRA staff members on their management of reservoirs. The weeks of July 12th or 19th are being considered because MWRA could not make any of our proposed dates. This will be a virtual meeting to which we might possibly invite the Merrimack Watershed Council to attend as well.

##### PFAS Task Force

Ms. Field-Juma said that she will testify at a PFAS Task Force Hearing on Beacon Hill next week. Other speakers will include scientists, municipal staff members, and representatives from nonprofits. She had a second conversation with the Task Force Staff about the impact of PFAS on drinking water and how, if you have one contaminated well, you must then use a different well (e.g., Wayland.) That could be problematic in that part of the basin as it could negatively impact wildlife. Last year the DEP sampled downstream of water treatment plants and upstream of drinking water. Ms. Field-Juma wondered if other groups could take on the monitoring if the DEP doesn't continue to do it. Mr. Sciacca noted that Wayland has a cap on its old town dump but he is not sure how effective that cap is presently. Ms. Henderson believes that landfill caps require Institutional Controls and monitoring wells. She learned this while discussing an easement which skirts a parcel outside the landfill.

##### **Dragonfly Mercury Project - July sampling**

Ms. Lord said that this year's sampling will occur on July 23<sup>rd</sup>. The 3 sampling sites are the same as were used in last year's study. Volunteers are invited to help out, including RSC members and school groups.

## Aquatic Ecological Restoration Partnership

OARS is working on a landscape level ecological restoration grant proposal for the Massachusetts DER. This will be a partnership of organizations looking at culverts, wetlands, and nature-based solutions to restore the health of aquatic ecosystems. She would like the RSC to be a stakeholder/partner and would also like a letter of support from other groups such as the Friends of Saxonville. Ms. Phu said that the USFS can write a letter of support since is not an advocacy-oriented project. It is a very competitive grant, with well-established organizations such as Mass Audubon also applying for a partnership in western Massachusetts. The grant could be for up to \$100,000, providing 75% of the funding for full-time staff at OARS and ancillary support for implementation projects.

8:17 pm

Ms. Henderson said that graffiti was removed from the Route 3 bridge in Billerica Marlies wondered if SVT might be interested in pursuing about 10 acres of RFA, connecting SVT Ralph Hill Homestead with Cabot Conservation Land. CPA could pay contribution to endowment fund. A discussion followed on possibly funding a graffiti artist to create art on popular graffiti sites along the WSR in an effort to keep less desirable taggers from repeatedly defacing recently cleaned surfaces. Mr. Chick said that the Friends of Saxonville received funding from the Framingham Cultural Council to create murals on the Sudbury River Floodgates. His suggestion that the RSC could create a grant for a juried art competition to create murals at appropriate locations along the WSR was widely approved and marked as a discussion item for the July meeting.

8:32 pm Ms. Field-Juma adjourned the meeting.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan