



## Minutes for July 30, 2024

**RSC Representatives present:** Marlies Henderson, Chair (Billerica), Emma Lord (NPS), Elissa Brown (Lead River Ambassador), Matt Brown (OARS), Ron Chick (Framingham), Christine Dugan (Lincoln), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Carlene Hempel (Concord), Laura Mattei (SVT), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), Ellie Sablak (River Ambassador), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt)

**RSC Representatives absent:** Dan Cook (Carlisle), John Drobinski (Sudbury), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Stephanie Koch (USFWS), Frank Richichi (Bedford)

### Welcome and July Minutes

7:02 Ms. Henderson opened the meeting. She called for a vote to accept the June Minutes as circulated. Mr. Sciacca motioned to accept the Minutes, Mr. Chick seconded, and the motion passed 9-0.

### RiverFest 2024 and River Ambassador Update

7:03 pm Ms. Sablak presented slides on RiverFest events held over the past month. The first event was a walk to the Two Brothers Rocks on the Concord River led by Althea Yates, former president of the Bedford Historical Society. A Sunrise Paddle led by the Carlisle Conservation Commission started and ended at the Bedford Boat Launch. It included breakfast at Billerica's Riverview restaurant. Peter Alden led about 20 people on a nature walk along the Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT) and the Assabet River Bluff Trail. Ms. Sablak led a river-themed story time at Concord's Fowler Library. She also offered river-themed crafts, introduced the Junior River Ranger program and handed out river maps to parents. OARS led a paddle on the Concord and Assabet rivers. Mr. Sciacca gave a talk at the Wayland library titled "The Birth, Death & Rebirth of Stone's Bridge, 1674–2024". There were 20 attendees at the library and more participating on Zoom. His talk will be available to view online. Hendrik Broekman led an evening photography walk along the Sudbury River at Heard Farm in Wayland. Nearly twice as many people attended this event as for the same walk last year. Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust led a Flora and Fauna Walk on the Concord River Greenway in Lowell during which the participants practiced using the Seek app to identify plants and animals. Peter Alden's talk on "The Changes in Concord's Bird Life from Thoreau's Day to Today" at the Fowler Library had 30 attendees. Michele Grzenda, Lincoln's Conservation Director, led a bird walk at Farm Meadow which included an indigo bunting sighting. There were multiple activities held on July 20<sup>th</sup> at The Old Manse in Concord. These included yoga, plein air painting, story time, and children's craft activities. Mass Audubon brought a turtle and other animals. Concord's Enviroscape table was very popular with children.

7:12 pm Ms. Henderson spoke about leading a RiverFest group of 10 participants that started from 2 Old Elm Street, the future site of the Middlesex Canal Museum. They walked along the section of the Middlesex Canal where Thoreau boated with his brother. She also led 10 paddlers on an afternoon trip from Billerica to Centennial Falls in Lowell.

7:14 pm Ms. Sablak said that a bald eagle was sighted on the Fairhaven Bay paddle led by Lincoln's Will Leona. The Framingham Conservation Commission led a walk that included the Cochituate Rail Trail and later a paddle on the upper Sudbury River. The Carlisle Trails Committee led a 3-hour walk starting at Foss Farm, passing through GMNWR and including Greenough Pond. The Fowler Library led a walk along the ARRT while discussing "The Boatman" by Robert

Thorson. Renata Pomponi from Mass Audubon led a River Lab session at the Fowler Library which included live macro invertebrates and some River Ranger activities. Ron McAdow shared wildlife photos and videos of beaver, muskrat, fishers, and a bobcat which were all taken near Fairhaven Bay. Rachel Wheeler and John Myers led a walk at Wright Woods in Concord. Brian Donahue and Tom Sciacca led a history paddle on the Sudbury River. Mr. Sciacca suggested that this be listed as a 3-hour paddle next year so that participants will not be surprised by its length.

7:21 pm Ms. Sablak then spoke about other River Ambassador activities in July. She said that Mr. Chick joined the River Ambassadors at a Framingham Farmer's Market in late June, bringing some Framingham trail maps with him. The Ambassadors planned to represent the RSC at more Farmers Markets over the summer. They visited multiple SuAsCo boat ramps. They attended RiverFest coordination meetings and Warner's Pond Task Force meetings. Ms. Brown has been doing some water quality work with OARS. She said that a couch was found on the bank of the Sudbury River. The Council discussed possible ways to remove it but did not have a solution. Ms. Brown offered to contact the Dept of Environmental Police.

7:24 pm Ms. Brown said that Ben Wetherell from OARS gave a presentation to the Warner's Pond Task Force on water quality. He said temperature measurements show that the ponding has caused a one-degree difference between areas upstream and downstream of Nashoba Brook. Separate Task Force work groups are looking at options for dam removal, dredging, and essentially doing nothing. Those work groups will eventually return with a proposal for the Task Force as a whole. Mr. Brown added that the temperature measurements were taken during the last 2 years, which were very high flow years. He believes that the logs from this year will show more than a one-degree temperature differential.

7: 28 pm Ms. Lord asked the group for their opinions on the new model of RiverFest events being held over 3-weeks rather than the 6-weeks of events in 2023. Ms. Brown said that it was a very busy time for the River Ambassadors, but she preferred it to the 6-week format. She would consider a 3-4 week schedule for 2025. Mr. Sciacca thought spreading out events was better than the old one weekend schedule. He expressed interest in seeing participation numbers for all events. Ms. Henderson liked the new schedule because event leaders had more opportunity to join events led by other leaders. Mr. Chick said that he would like to see some June RiverFest events before people leave for summer vacations and students are still in town. He suggested contacting school systems about RiverFest.

#### **Warner's Pond Subcommittee Update**

7:33 pm Ms. Hempel said that Real Quest Films now has four hours of footage from Warner's Pond to use for the Subcommittee's 2-minute promotional film. Julia Khorana and Matt Brown were interviewed. The videographers will return in August to take B-roll footage of invasives and places where the pond looks choked. Possible interviews for the next filming include experts in flooding, wildlife, and an abutter who is in favor of dam removal. The Subcommittee will ask Concord to create a high-resolution map for its promotional materials.

#### **Partner and Community Grant Reports**

7:38 pm The Council discussed interim Community Grant reports from Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust, CISMA, SVT, Wayland Conservation Commission and Mass Audubon. Ms. Lord motioned to accept the two Community Grant and the two Partner Grant reports that were received in time to be read before this meeting, Mr. Chick seconded. The motion passed 9-0. Ms. Lord said that the RSC can now release funds to these organizations.

7:50 pm Ms. Lord opened a discussion on the draft 2024-2025 Community Grant RFP that was circulated by email. It was basically unchanged from last year. The Council has \$43,000 to fund 2024-2025 grants. The RFP should be posted in about a week. She asked Council members to let organizations in their communities know about this opportunity. Ms. Lord stated that the application is open to municipalities and organizations in the eight Wild and Scenic communities and also to upstream watershed communities.

#### **Other/Updates**

7:59 pm Ms. Henderson said that it might be time to form a Subcommittee to update the 2019-2025 RSC Strategic Plan. Ms. Mattei suggested that everyone re-read the Plan and provide some initial feedback. Ms. Lord was in favor of this approach, adding that some items might carry over to the next 5-year Strategic Plan because the Council doesn't need to write a new one from scratch. She offered to make the Plan available as a Google Document. RSC members will be able to assess and evaluate the current plan, add updates and edits, and exchange ideas before the September meeting.

8:10 pm Ms. Henderson brought up the annual August paddle for Council members. The date and location for the paddle will be finalized through email among interested members.

### **Community Updates**

8:17 pm Ms. Henderson asked if anyone had Community Updates. Mr. Chick said that bids have gone out for the replacement & expansion of boardwalks and footbridges, construction of viewing platforms, and trail resurfacing along portions of the Carol Getchell Nature Trail in Framingham.

8:18 pm Mr. Brown said that OARS's first Car Top Swap Meet for all things paddle-related would be held on Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>. Tables are available for community organizations. A river cleanup in Northborough will be held on the same day. River clean ups will be held at other sites and he encouraged Council members to look at the OARS website for more information on those.

8:21 pm Ms. Brown said that Concord was just awarded a \$400,000 grant for the multi-use Assabet River Bridge and Trail. Mr. Sciacca said that Wayland's emergency MWRA connection will be activated soon. Work can then start on the Happy Hollow wells that have been found to contain PFAS. He said that after 15 years of encouragement by he and Mr. Fadden, the reconstruction of Stone's Bridge will start soon.

8:25 Mr. Chick said that the Framingham Conservation Dept. has cut a path from the lower field at Cameron School to the Carol Getchell Trail and has also cut a new trail near Little Farms Road which makes access easier to the north side of the Carol Getchell Trail.

8:29 pm Ms. Brown referred to a grant the RSC gave to AMC to build an extension of the Bay Circuit Trail from the Council on Aging to Cow Common in Wayland. She recently walked that area with Brian Harris from Wayland's Conservation Dept. She said that the trail is not built just yet but that wooded vegetation has been cut away and that AmeriCorps volunteers will build the trail over the wet areas.

8:31 pm Ms. Henderson said that she forwarded Billerica's draft Open Space and Recreation Plan to Ms. Lord and Ms. Brown for their review.

8:32 pm Mr. Chick said that he will be applying for a CPA grant for work on 2,000 feet of the middle section of the Carol Getchell Trail which is not included in the work that is out for bids.

8:34 pm Mr. Chick motioned to adjourn, Ms. Mattei seconded, and the motion passed 9-0.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan