



Minutes for the March 2021 meeting

RSC Representatives present: Anne Slugg, Chair (Sudbury), Emma Lord (NPS), Larry Buell (Lincoln), Amber Carr (SVT), Ron Chick (Framingham-Alt), Christine Dugan (Lincoln-Alt), Bill Fadden (Framingham), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Marlies Henderson (Billerica), Linh Phu (USFWS), Tom Sciacca (Wayland), David Witherbee (Concord)

RSC Representatives absent: Mary Antes (Wayland-Alt), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Joseph Piantedosi (Bedford-Alt), Trek Reef (Billerica-Alt)

Guest from SVT: Christa Collins

Location: Zoom Video Call

7:03 pm February minutes

Ms. Slugg opened the meeting. Ms. Henderson motioned to accept the February minutes as presented. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

7:05 pm Mid-Year Update from SVT

Ms. Collins spoke about current projects of interest to the RSC. These included the possibility of installing a pollinator garden at a senior housing village in West Concord, a scheduled June 1 closing for the Chickatawbut Woods property in Framingham, fundraising for a trail connector at Callahan State Park, and mowing for woodcock habitat at Greenways Conservation Area in Wayland.

7:12 pm Middlesex Canal Museum Interpretive Panel

Ms. Henderson shared the latest design for the Middlesex Canal Museum's interpretive panel and requested comments. While Council members discussed the nuances of some wording it was agreed that no changes in design or wording were needed. Ms. Henderson said the Museum may ask for CPA funds to include an elevator.

Ms. Henderson said that Billerica has purchased the property at 8 Carter Avenue which offers river access as well as an adjoining parcel. Both will become conservation properties. They may eventually include boat access, a parking lot, and a memorial pollinator garden in memory of a former long term conservation assistant. She said that \$75,000 for improvements has been approved. Another \$100,000 will be sought for a possible dock. Ms. Lord suggested that Billerica investigate the Challenge Cost Share program funding from the NPS and National Park

Trust to help with costs for providing river access. Ms. Slugg noted that Billerica could submit a RSC community grant application for up to \$10,000.

7:50 pm **Riverfest 2021**

Ms. Lord said that she sent a Riverfest 2021 Event List Form to individuals and organizations interested in hosting virtual or in-person events. She asked for opinions about whether this year's kickoff party should be in-person or virtual. The consensus was that the RSC would prefer a virtual party since concern about COVID-19 transmission is still high. Ms. Slugg said that there will not be an awards ceremony this year. Ms. Phu said that this would be an opportunity to get to know each other socially and that virtual games such as jeopardy, trivia, or testing our bird songs or frog calls could build camaraderie. Ms. Lord mentioned that instead of printing brochures, we will be printing postcards or half-sheets fliers to inform people about Riverfest and include a link to our website and full event schedule. Ms. Lord said that the Riverfest advertising on our website will be more map based than it was last year.

8:05 pm **Internal Projects**

Ms. Slugg said that the money the RSC previously set aside specifically for internal projects will be available from the fall of 2021 through the summer of 2022. She asked which projects RSC representatives might want to work on and encouraged the group to consider how to move these projects forward when we have the funding to do so. Mr. Chick expressed interest in creating several interpretive panels for Framingham. Mr. Sciacca and Ms. Carr expressed interest in the river stewardship internship, Ms. Dugan would like to start research on the mobile app. Ms. Slugg asked other members to email her with their preference for which project to join. Ms. Phu said that her USFWS team might be able to contribute a story map about the Sudbury River for the app. Mr. Hammond said that Bedford could use replacements for missing fishing signs warning that fish from the Concord River are not edible due to mercury levels.

8:15 pm **Event Updates/Reports**

Diversity and Inclusion Workshop

Ms. Phu said that she participated in a grant funded workshop to train the Board of The Friends of the Assabet River NWR on issues concerning diversity. The meeting included a conversation with Christa Collins of the SVT. Staff from OARS, SVT, Ms. Phu's staff, and representatives to the Nashua River Watershed Association were also in attendance. A guest speaker counseled the group about actions that could be taken by organizations, partners, and community groups to recognize unconscious bias and to locate outdoor spaces where people of color currently do not feel safe visiting. Ms. Phu will share information on an upcoming community presentation on equity and inclusion when details become available. Mr. Hammond said that making the outdoors accessible to disabled individuals is another overlooked issue and suggested that mapping ADA compliant areas be included in planning for the RSC's mobile app.

8:35 pm 2021 Hill Week Report

Ms. Dugan said that she and Ms. Field-Juma had virtual meetings with staff members from 9 of Massachusetts' 11 Congressional offices to lobby for all of Massachusetts' Wild & Scenic Rivers. Every staff member said that their Senator or Representative would sign on to the Dear Colleague letter requesting full funding this year for the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. For the first time representatives from the Nashua WSR and The Nature Conservancy participated in some meetings. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Coalition held virtual workshops for WSR representatives. These river protection workshops were ably led by a combination of speakers from large and small river organizations and by federal employees.

8:39 pm Other news

Mr. Sciacca updated the RSC on the Rivers Edge Project in Wayland, a large apartment complex on Route 20 which has been in development for about 10 years. It is situated not far from the Sudbury River. Recently arsenic, nickel, and ammonia were found in the groundwater. Engineers say that the source of the contaminants is the Sudbury landfill, which has been closed for 15 years. Mr. Sciacca would like the RSC to comment on the concentration levels of these contaminants, as well as the mercury that we know is there, because these toxins will eventually reach the river and drinking water. Wayland residents petitioned for a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) which led to a public meeting and a comment period. Mr. Sciacca would like the RSC to submit a comment letter, preferably by April 7th. That is the original end of the comment period. An extension was requested but it may not be valid. Ms. Slugg said that she will contact a Sudbury resident she knows to have specialized knowledge of this issue.

Mr. Sciacca spoke about a group email he sent out on March 24 inquiring about joint interest in an MVP grant to work with other SuAsCo towns to look at river flooding. He has since determined that writing a multi-town proposal would be difficult. He is now working on a proposal concerning a railroad trestle in Wayland that is immediately downstream of a tributary and acts as a significant restriction to river flow.

Ms. Henderson said that Billerica's MVP process has been delayed due to a change in town staffing.

9:06 pm

The meeting was adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan