



Minutes for September 28, 2021

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

RSC Representatives absent: Ron Chick (Framingham), Joseph Piantedosi (Bedford-Alt), Trek Reef (Billerica-Alt)

Guest: Anne Gagnon, Mass. Dept of Fish & Game

7:08 pm Welcome and July Minutes

Eric Simms and Anne Gagnon were introduced to Council members.

Ms. Slugg inquired about corrections to the July minutes; none were offered. Ms. Henderson moved to accept the minutes as distributed, Mr. Sciacca seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

7:16 pm Follow up on MWRA presentation

Ms. Lord spoke about MWRA's Sept. 2nd presentation on the Sudbury River to RSC members. This video conference centered on the history of the river system and current MWRA management practices upstream of the WSR. Mr. Sciacca said his impression is that their engineers are focused on total reliability. They help to maintain their system with multiple backups and operate in a narrow control band to ensure that Boston has the water it needs. He believes that this priority will almost certainly take precedence over any request the RSC may make on behalf of the WSR. Mr. Fadden related that he had asked if any water could be released from Reservoir 1 or 2 as they contain millions of gallons of water and were designed for the purpose of releasing water back into the river as needed. He noted that only Reservoir 3 is reserved for drinking water. After a group discussion Mr. Fadden agreed that he would reach out to both the DCR and the MWRA asking about the possibility of releasing water during a low flow period if requested by the RSC. He will sort through previous reports to arrive at a recommended number of gallons the RSC can use as the basis for its request.

7:40 pm RSC Bylaws Review and Discussion

Ms. Slugg brought up the possibility of changing language in the bylaws. Presently both the Chair and Vice-Chair are serving well beyond their term limits. Ms. Slugg proposed that the Council modify the bylaws to eliminate term limits for those seats. She offered to email the proposed changes for all Council members to review as not all members were present at this meeting. Ms. Lord said the changes would be finalized 60 days after the RSC voted to approve them. She motioned that we modify our

bylaws by removing term limits, circulate that language to review, then take a vote. Ms. Field-Juma seconded. The motion passed by a vote of 11-0.

7: 50 pm **FY22 Internal Projects and Interpretive signs**

Ms. Lord shared a spreadsheet of all the locations previously discussed for WSR interpretive panels. In answer to Mr. Chick's question, she noted that our signs can be made in 3 sizes: 18"x24", 24"x36", and 36"x48". Ms. Phu said that any sign on USFWS land will need to conform to very specific USFWS requirements. She wondered if maintenance and upkeep would fall to the RSC. The consensus was that either our summer interns or the town representatives could be responsible for cleaning them on an annual basis. It was agreed that the first signs should be created for Billerica, Concord, Framingham, and Lincoln. An additional sign may be approved for Framingham but because Mr. Chick was absent that decision would have to be made at a later time. Possible locations in Wayland were discussed but further talks between Wayland and the USFWS must take place before a final location is approved. Mr. Witherbee said that the RSC's request for a sign at Lowell Road has been approved by Concord. Ms. Slugg suggested that the 6 towns interested in creating interpretive signs for installation in the summer of 2022 should schedule a meeting among themselves to discuss the necessary steps to take this project forward.

8:00 pm **Wayland Turf Field crumb rubber spill**

Mr. Sciacca said that in 2007 an artificial turf field was installed between Wayland High School and the Sudbury River. That field contained shredded rubber tires. It was replaced last year with one made of virgin rubber. In August 2021 a remnant of Hurricane Ida flooded the new turf field. That event led to a major spill of rubber pellets into the nearby drainage swale as well as into the vicinity of an older drainage swale which is connected to the river. Mr. Sciacca, Ms. Lord, Wayland town staff members, and Stephanie Koch of the USFWS met recently at the turf field. Ms. Koch noticed rubber pellet "crumbs" in the marsh. She directed the Town Administrator to cut back the vegetation in order to see how far the crumbs had travelled into the marsh and then to investigate whether it had reached the Refuge. The Town Administrator is waiting for permission from the Conservation Commission before proceeding to cut back vegetation. Ms. Koch said that before a contractor can do the necessary remediation and clean-up it is important that the Town determine the extent of the contamination. Ms. Phu said that the water level is too high to work in that area now, that she will talk to someone at DEP, and that she has reported this incident to MassWildlife. She is concerned about the impact on the river. Mr. Sciacca said that there is a PFAS contaminated well 600 feet away from this spill and that a nearby leach field is also contaminated with PFAS.

8:08 pm **Saxonville Levee Trail Link project**

In the Spring of 2021 Mr. Chick had inquired about combining small pockets of unassigned RSC funds to be used for improvements on the Saxonville Levee Trail. An interpretive sign could be positioned strategically along the Cochituate Rail Trail to encourage visitors to explore the nearby Carol Getchell walking trail along the WSR. A bike rack and benches would encourage visitors to linger in the area. Mr. Chick was encouraged to write up a proposal, which he submitted to the Council for review at this evening's meeting. Upon further consideration, however, the Council decided that it would add this unallocated money to the Community Grant budget and ask Framingham to submit an application for grant funding.

Ms. Field-Juma mentioned that OARS is running low on recreational maps for the Assabet and Sudbury Rivers, and she was encouraged to submit a community grant application to cover the cost of map updates and reprinting. Ms. Phu suggested that we approach other groups such as MassWildlife or Afro Boston to see if we could send them SuAsCo maps to share or distribute too.

8:39 pm Other updates:

Ms. Lord asked for comments on the partner reports that were circulated by email in advance of presentations in December and January. Ms. Field-Juma was interested in knowing more about the demographics of the people that AMC was able to reach. Ms. Henderson noted that this was the first report that the Middlesex Canal Museum staff had submitted. She asked for feedback she could share with them concerning their formatting or content.

8:44 pm Ms. Henderson said that on October 3rd there would be a ribbon cutting ceremony for the newly built deck at the Middlesex Canal Museum and that the interpretive panel that the RSC had funded would be unveiled. It will be a hybrid live/Zoom event. Ms. Lord will pre-record a video to be shown and many other guests, including state Rep. Cindy Friedman, are expected to attend in person.

8:50 pm Ms. Field-Juma spoke about a SuAsCo Climate Resiliency Coalition which OARS has started. The first meeting included discussions on which communities would be willing to help coordinate efforts, on how front-line communities could recover from climate disasters, and on possible ways they could reach out to people who have not yet been able to offer input on these issues. The Coalition will begin to look for funding sources. Mr. Sciacca said that Concord has an excellent Climate Action and Resilience Plan which could be helpful, as could talking with Wayland's Energy and Climate Committee.

8:57 pm Ms. Phu said that the Friends of the Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge have official Board member support for their merger with the Friends of the Oxbow River NWR. The merged group will continue to act as stewards for the Assabet River, Oxbow, and Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuges. Ms. Phu spoke of recent USFWS activities relating to the Refuges' fire program. Prescribed burns were carried out with a burn boss and 2 fire technicians. Newly revised fire plans include box-and-burn strategies and are carried out in cooperation with appropriate state representatives, local fire departments, and Massachusetts agencies. Three new employees have been hired for Great Meadows NWR.

9:00 pm Meeting adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan