

Minutes for November 30, 2021

RSC Representatives present: Anne Slugg, Chair (Sudbury), Emma Lord (NPS), Ron Chick (Framingham), Christine Dugan (Lincoln-Alt), Bill Fadden (Framingham-Alt), Alison Field-Juma (OARS), Ralph Hammond (Bedford), Marlies Henderson (Billerica), Linh Phu (USFWS), Tom Sciacca (Wayland),

RSC Representatives absent: Amber Carr (SVT), Joseph Piantedosi (Bedford-Alt), Trek Reef (Billerica-Alt), Eric Simms (Wayland-Alt), David Witherbee (Concord)

7:05 pm **Welcome and October Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Slugg asked for corrections to the October minutes. Ms. Henderson suggested an edit to the discussion on the Middlesex Canal Museum's grant proposal and then motioned that the October minutes be accepted with that change. Mr. Hammond seconded, and the minutes were passed unanimously.

7:07 **Bylaws Update**

Ms. Slugg noted that the comment period had passed for a proposed change to the RSC Bylaws which would eliminate term limits for officers. Ms. Henderson motioned to accept this change, Ms. Slugg seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

7:09 pm **2022 Community Grant Proposals (continued from October 2021 meeting)**

Ms. Lord reported that the Framingham Centre Common Cultural District had received about \$14,000 in funding so far and was proceeding with its public sculpture project. Their Board will allow some of the art to be placed outside of cultural district. Ms. Phu wondered whether an art project was the best way to promote SuAsCo ORV's, or if a better use for the money could be found. As examples, she mentioned funding a program for underserved communities in order to make an impact on audiences we don't normally attract or to extend employment for our summer interns. After a show of hands, the Council voted 7-2 to fund \$3,500 for one sculpture to be installed at a location to be determined later.

Ms. Field-Juma thought this discussion about funding art work highlighted the need for the Council to be more intentional about creating opportunities for diversity, inclusion, and equity. Ms. Phu noted that The Friends of the Assabet River created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement which could be helpful to the RSC. Ms. Field-Juma thought that we could expand our outreach to large organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Club, which are concerned with these issues and often apply for grants. She also thought that Mass Audubon might have a useful perspective to share with us. Mr. Sciacca recommended that the Council invite a local Diversity or Metco Director to a future RSC meeting.

8:10 pm **Concord Projects/Properties: 2B Upland Road and Junction Village**

Ms. Lord spoke about the property at **2B Upland Road** in West Concord which is currently for sale. Concord would like to purchase the land for conservation, affordable housing, and public access. The property has frontage along the Assabet River segment of the WSR. There is a WSR interpretive panel near the property along the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, and the property includes an informal trail. If the land is protected the trail would be made public under a conservation restriction. OARS sent a letter of support to the CPA Committee, and Ms. Lord thought it would be helpful for the RSC to send in a letter in support as well.

Roughly half of the 12.8 acre **Junction Village** property near Nashoba Brook in Concord has been permitted for an affordable assisted living facility. The remaining half is designated for public open space. The Junction Village Open Space Task Force is charged with helping to prepare an Open Space Master Plan for this property. Ms. Lord and Ms. Field-Juma suggested that the RSC send a letter in support of plans to remove invasives and create a low impact, publicly accessible park. Ms. Lord said that she would work with Mr. Witherbee to draft letters in support of both Concord projects.

8:21 pm **Other/Updates**

Mr. Fadden proposed a follow up conversation with the MWRA about using the Stearns Dam gate to potentially augment the Sudbury River during a severe drought, such as the one we experienced in 2015. He noted past instances when the reservoir was allowed to be drawn down. He proposed contacting John Scannell at DCR about creating an agreement for releasing some water during extreme drought conditions. The suggested number of gallons to be requested could be agreed upon by interested RSC representatives through an email exchange.

8:30 pm Ms. Lord noted that an upcoming issue of NPS's *WSR River Currents* will include an article written by Ms. Henderson on the observation deck and interpretive panel which the RSC funded for the Middlesex Canal Museum and Visitors Center, as well as the ribbon cutting ceremony there in October 2021.

8:32 pm Ms. Henderson spoke about a plan to extend a town sewer line to homes on Dudley Road in Billerica. Several residents of Dudley Road created a petition opposing the sewer line expansion with the concern that the expansion would invite further development near the Concord River. Ms. Henderson asked for further discussion about the topic and suggested inviting the engineers of this project to present their plan to the RSC so that the Council could consider the possible impact of the proposed sewer line on the SuAsCo.

8:39 pm Mr. Chick said that he has been asked by the newly elected mayor of Framingham to lead a new environmental committee. He said that he will reach out to other members of the community, including OARS and the RSC, in an effort to create a baseline assessment for Framingham.

8:42 pm Mr. Sciacca said that previously allotted funding to repair Stone Bridge will be reconsidered at the 2022 Wayland Town Meeting because the bridge is located entirely in Framingham. Mr. Fadden said that the Old Stone Bridge, which was destroyed in 1955, had been located in both Framingham and Wayland. The new bridge was built on dry land and the Sudbury River was then re-routed to run under it.

8:46 pm Ms. Phu said that the Friends of the Assabet River NWR has merged with the Friends of the Oxbow NWR and that this combined group will also be involved with Great Meadows NWR. She said that if anyone on the Council would like to support Great Meadows they could consider joining the new Friends group. Ms. Phu is hiring several individuals for the Great Meadows NWR, including a GS11 Services Manager, a maintenance person, a Biotech staff member, and a Visitor Center Ranger. She will hire more staff after the new year. The old building will eventually be demolished and replaced with a smaller, LEED certified one. The plan for the new building is being worked on now.

8:49 pm Ms. Field-Juma said that OARS has filed an appeal of the NPDES Final Permit for the Marlborough Westerly Wastewater Treatment Plant. The EPA improperly drafted the Final Permit, making a substantial change from the Draft Permit concerning the effluent discharge limits for phosphorus entering the Assabet River. OARS is challenging the EPA on procedural grounds, not public comments. EPA Region 1 wants to talk with OARS. If this proceeds as a case, then amicus briefs filed by the town of Stow and the USFWS will be the only other means to intervene at this level. Ms. Field-Juma expressed hope that the EPA will want to pursue settlement or withdraw its misinformed permit.

8:55 pm Ms. Slugg reminded the group that RSC partners will give updates on their work at our January meeting. She said that the Council will need to discuss how to spend its remaining funds for this year after Community and Partner grants are awarded. She suggested that the issues of environmental justice, how to incorporate our JEDI goals, and improving our outreach be taken up at our January meeting. She and Ms. Lord may reach out to Council members about scheduling either a December meeting or two January meetings.

9 pm Ms. Slugg adjourned the meeting.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Christine Dugan