

Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council

Minutes

January 27, 2021

In Attendance: Exeter: Nan Quinlan; Hopkinton: Elaine Caldarone; North Kingstown: Jim LeBlanc; North Stonington: Dick Seager, Madeline Jeffery; Richmond: Antonia Bryson, Pete August; South Kingstown: Dennis Migneault; Stonington: Fred Wagner, Sara Baker Bailey; West Greenwich: Pat Lardner; Westerly: Jon Ericson, Lauren Barber; CT DEEP, Eric Thomas; Save the Bay: Dave Prescott; Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association, Brett Still; RI DEM: Tee Jay Boudreau; National Park Service: Jamie Fosburgh and Lauren Bonatakis, NPS associate

A quorum having been met, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm

Secretary's Report: D. Migneault moved the approval of the Minutes of the November 18, 2020 meeting. D. Prescott seconded. The secretary will change the title and add J. Fosburgh to the attendees. With those changes the motion was approved.

Financial Report: F. Wagner moved the approval of the Monthly Financial Report. D. Migneault seconded. The treasurer will change the headings to 2020. With that change the motion was approved.

Committee Reports

1. Bylaws

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA) as drafted by the Council was sent to WPWA last week. The chair will follow up as appropriate. There has been a change in leadership at WPWA which may add time. The chair will share the draft with B. Still as well.

2. Executive

K. Donnelly returned from leave to work on specified assignments on January 12, and will be continuing her work as Project Coordinator, with revised duties, starting February 17. She will focus on project implementation, and will be available to provide knowledge and support to committees only on an as-needed basis. She will no longer serve as treasurer. N. Quinlan moved to confirm the duties of the Project Coordinator as stated. F. Wagner seconded and the motion carried.

P. August will continue to serve as interim treasurer until the May election of officers, and will no longer serve as Secretary. A. Bryson has volunteered to serve as interim secretary until the May election. The chair inquired whether there were any nominations for interim secretary, and there were none. F. Wagner moved to extend the term of P. August as interim treasurer. S. Bailey seconded and the motion carried. F. Wagner moved to appoint A. Bryson as interim secretary. D. Migneault seconded and the motion carried.

P. August presented the results of the second poll on the ranking of projects that had been identified by the Projects Committee. There were seven projects ranked as either high or medium priority, and all of them have a Council member who has volunteered to lead the project. The seven projects are:

- Art World Focus
- River Day
- Big River Cleanup
- Briggs Memorial Park
- Native Plant/Invasive Species Presentations/Planting
- Four ORV Paddles
- Three Town Kayak Trail

P. August and volunteer leads briefly described each project and members asked questions regarding implementation of the projects. F. Wagner moved to approve advancing all seven projects to the next stage of preparing 2021/2022 budget estimates. P. Lardner seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

P. August provided a format for budget estimates. These are due February 8. There will be a budget workshop on February 17.

3. Advisory Committee

The committee assisted Hopkinton representative E. Caldarone in preparing comments on a proposed ordinance regulating solar energy systems in the town. With the assistance of K. Donnelly, the committee prepared a comment letter which was submitted to the Department of Environmental Management regarding the proposed revision of the State's regulations for freshwater wetlands. The letter requested significant strengthening of protections for streams, vernal pools, and coldwater fisheries within the watershed. A. Bryson reported that the Richmond Conservation Commission has received a draft of a report prepared by its consultants assessing the current state of, future threats to, and proposed protective actions for, the Beaver River Watershed. Stakeholder comments should be submitted by Feb. 3, and there is a public hearing Feb. 10. Lauren Bonatakis assisted the Committee by researching solar ordinances.

4. Projects

E. Caldarone reported on her discussion with Hopkinton town officials regarding the Briggs Memorial Park project. Sufficient parking for the site is a concern of the town. They require a concept plan prepared by an engineer in order to proceed. E. Caldarone will provide costs for the plan for the next Council meeting. If the town approves the concept plan, it is willing to provide in-kind services.

5. Information & Education

The committee is encouraging town representatives to work with their towns on installing river signage on town roads. A. Bryson reported on meeting with Richmond town officials to get agreement on locations and responsibilities for signs in Richmond. Five locations were agreed to, with the Council supplying the signs and the town providing the labor and installation materials. The committee is looking for members for its social media/communications subcommittee. D. Migneault presented a revised mission statement for the committee. After discussion, L. Barber moved to approve the statement, S. Bailey seconded, and the motion was carried.

New Business

Town Updates

N. Stonington: D. Seager has been talking to his town about road signs. Three signs have been erected.

Exeter: there is a new town council.

West Greenwich: its conservation commission hasn't met because of restrictions on who can use zoom. First meeting after a long hiatus is taking place soon.

Westerly: the town has applied for a trail grant for White Rock to improve parking and install a kayak launch. W&S supported the grant.

Kayak trail

The tri-town committee met in December with plans to meet again in April. J. Ericson noted that the Council will pause from these discussions with the intent of improving the coordination of activities upon resumption of participation, having better understood the need for the Council to drive discussions vs. the towns. NPS Jamie and Lauren agreed to help with discussions as needed. The Kayak ad hoc committee met several times and has drafted a Kayak Trail proposal that captures the mission and goals as envisaged by the Council. J. Ericson also noted that D. Prescott and P. August will be leading the kayak trail discussions going forward to help him with the overall coordination within the Council.

I & E budget

D. Migneault requested approval to expend the remaining amount budgeted for signage. The amount is \$6797.

P. August moved to approve the expenditure. F. Wagner seconded and the motion carried.

Budget

N. Quinin requested funding in the new budget for future new projects. P. August will add to appropriate place in admin budget.

Good of the Order

DOT intends to repair the Kings Factory Bridge over the Pawcatuck River. NPS submitted comments and reported that there will be no boat passage under the bridge during repairs. There was discussion on the impact of such a closure on paddlers and questioning whether it was necessary. J. Fosburgh agreed to follow up to see if total closure is necessary. D. Migneault suggested exploring whether getting a temporary easement at the bridge to allow portage around it is possible if indeed the water crossing beneath the bridge is going to be closed as initially described.

There is a February 9 zoom meeting with all Partnership W&S Councils. J. Ericson and K. Donnelly will participate. All Council members are invited. The meeting will have representatives from all 16 Partnership W&S councils and will discuss program updates, the NPS budget, and opportunities for exchange of information.

A motion to adjourn was made by P. August and seconded by F. Wagner, and adjournment was approved at 8:19 PM.

Next Meeting: Fourth Wednesday of each month at 6pm. Date is February 24, 2021.