

Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council

Minutes

February 24, 2021

In Attendance: Exeter: Nan Quinlan; Hopkinton: Elaine Caldarone, Chip Heil; Richmond: Antonia Bryson, Pete August; South Kingstown: Dennis Migneault, Bill McCusker; Stonington: Fred Wagner, Sara Baker Bailey; North Stonington, Madeline Jeffery; West Greenwich: Chris Grube, Pat Lardner; Westerly: Jon Ericson, Lauren Barber; CT DEEP, Eric Thomas; Save the Bay: Dave Prescott; Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association, Brett Still; National Park Service: Lauren Bonatakis; RI DEM, Tee Jay Boudreau; Kassi Donnelly, Coordinator.

A quorum having been met, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm

Secretary's Report: P. August moved the approval of the minutes of the January 27, 2021 meeting. D. Migneault seconded. There being no discussion, the motion passed.

Financial Report: D. Prescott moved the approval of the Monthly Financial Report. D. Migneault seconded. There being no discussion, the motion passed. The treasurer P. August described the process which had been undertaken to prepare the annual budget. The draft budget was presented to the Council for discussion at a workshop on February 17 and was submitted for approval at this meeting. C. Grube moved to approve the budget as presented and N. Quinlan seconded. The motion passed. P. August explained that he and K. Donnelly may realign the categories in which the approved amounts appear to the equivalent NPS categories, according to NPS requirements.

The newly appointed alternate member from Hopkinton, C. Heil, introduced himself to the members.

Committee Reports

1. Bylaws--

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association has been forwarded to the Association for review by its board. It is expected that the two organizations will be able to discuss and finalize the document in the next few weeks.

J. Ericson presented a draft of Policy #3—Responsibilities and Guidelines for Membership. P. August moved to approve the policy and S. Baker seconded. It was suggested that the policy include as a final item a statement that members are expected to comply with the bylaws. The motion was amended to so require and was passed.

2. Executive

J. Ericson reported on items which the committee will be discussing in its next meeting. One item is in-kind reporting, a mechanism for registering the amount of time members and other unpaid persons spend on Council work. NPS has requested such reporting, and it will be useful for the Council. Another item is a mechanism to track progress on projects which are undertaken by the Council.

3. Advisory Committee

There were no events to report.

4. Projects Committee

The Committee is monitoring the project at Briggs Park and has looked at a potential similar project at Beaver River Park. N. Quinlan attended RI DEM's educational training on their Critter Kits with K. Donnelly. They are vetting possible new projects and partnerships and monitoring the news of a new campus for the Tomaquaug Museum.

4. Information & Education

The hats provided by the Committee have been very successful in generating enthusiasm for the watershed and educating the public. P. Lardner reported on her efforts to distribute hats and identified good prospects for further distribution, including town officials, retail merchants, paddle clubs, and scouts. D. Migneault reported that more hats are arriving, including safety orange and a bunch destined for the river cleanup day hosted by West Greenwich Conservation Commission. P. August reminded the group of the online order form for members, for which the link is: <https://forms.gle/1zaLjtt28zbG4N1P9>. D. Migneault reported that the social media committee will focus on council members only for the present. They are researching software platforms to expand distribution in the future.

New Business

1. Town Updates

Richmond: A. Bryson reported that the Zoning Board denied the permit for a solar energy system at 172 Beaver River Road. The Council had recommended denial. The developer is expected to appeal to court.

Stonington: F. Wagner reported that both Westerly and Stonington will be provided with the same signs for the Stillman and White Rock bridges by the Council, a commendable joint town effort. L. Barber reported the W&S signs have been delivered to the Town of Westerly. The Towns are coordinating installation for good press.

Hopkinton: E. Caldarone reported that the proposed new zoning ordinance on solar energy installations had been revised to exclude commercial solar energy systems in residential districts, nullifying the Council comments. She also reported on a proposed commercial solar energy project entitled Stone Ridge, which is coming before the Planning Board next week, and which is adjacent in part to Canonchet Brook. It was agreed that the Advisory Committee would draft a letter for submission to the Board alerting it to the Council's role in protecting the watershed and indicating its interest in the project from that perspective.

K. Donnelly inquired whether town representatives are holding regular meetings with their town's staff. Nearly all the towns present indicated they had some type of regular contact with their town staff.

F. Wagner inquired whether the Council has a policy guiding how it takes positions on the siting of solar energy systems. The inquiry was tabled for discussion at a future meeting.

2. Budget process

J. Ericson suggested that the Council review the process by which the budget was developed this year and document it. A draft will be developed by the Executive Committee for Council consideration.

Good of the Order

J. Ericson directed attention to the annual review in the latest issue of the Dragonfly Express as a chance to reflect on past accomplishments. K. Donnelly thanked members for smooth functioning during her leave and for the gift for her baby. J. Ericson noted the Council will be featured as new council in the newsletter of the Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers. P. August reminded members they will be reimbursed if they register for the Massachusetts/Rhode Island land conservation summit to take place in March. P. Lardner informed members of the RIKA general meeting in March which will feature a presentation on invasive aquatic plants.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by P. August and seconded by N. Quinlan, and adjournment was approved at 7:33 PM.

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

