

Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council

Minutes

Meeting Held on June 23, 2021

In Attendance: Charlestown: B. Maietta; Hopkinton: Elaine Caldarone, Chip Heil; North Kingstown: Ahren Cohen; Richmond: Antonia Bryson, Pete August; South Kingstown: Dennis Migneault, Bill McCusker; Stonington: Sara Baker; North Stonington: Madeline Jeffery; West Greenwich: Chris Grube; Westerly: Jon Ericson; CT DEEP: Eric Thomas; WPWA: Brett Still; National Park Service: Lauren Bonatakis; Kassi Donnelly, Coordinator.

A quorum having been met, the Chair called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm.

Secretary's Report: A. Bryson presented the draft minutes of the May 26, 2021 meeting. P. August moved to accept the minutes as presented, and D. Migneault seconded. There being no discussion, the motion was voted on and passed.

Financial Report:

P. August presented the monthly financial report. J. Ericson moved to approve the financial report and M. Jeffery seconded. There being no discussion, the motion was voted on and passed.

Committee Requests

1. Executive: (a) C. Grube reported on a test of a hybrid meeting format which took place at the Executive Committee meeting. As a result, the Committee is looking to upgrade the technical capabilities at the WPWA campus. K. Donnelly is researching the technology and evaluating possibilities and costs. Improved access in a hybrid format may be tested at the next Executive Committee meeting but the next full Council meeting will remain virtual. (b) C. Grube reported that the Committee will be working on an outline to be supplied to town representatives, with a request that the representative appear at a town council meeting for the purpose of reacquainting the town with its representative and giving it an update on the activities of the Council. Although emailing the council is a possible alternative, it was suggested that an in-person appearance is superior and much more likely to achieve the objective.
2. Advisory: (a) and (b) A. Bryson reported on a request from the town of North Stonington regarding a proposed solar energy system presently under consideration for approval by the Connecticut Siting Council. The Committee concluded that, given the lengthy record of the proceeding, and lack of an obvious concern with the proposed system that is within the Council's purview, that the Council should not prepare specific comments. Rather, it should build a relationship with the town planner by providing its Best Practices for Solar Energy Systems guidance document and encouraging future collaboration. This guidance document had been provided to the membership prior to the meeting. P. August moved to approve and send the document to North Stonington as the Council's identification of best practices. After discussion, the motion was amended by P. August to approve the document and send it to North Stonington, after removing the word "internal", referencing the ORVs and the Stewardship Plan, and considering referencing additional resources. B. McCusker seconded the motion and it was approved. (c) A. Bryson noted that the Council had received a request from the Committee as part of the documents supplied with the agenda regarding an informational workshop on Low Impact Development practices and the role of towns in their adoption. The workshop would be presented by Jenny Paquet, the

point person for nonpoint stormwater runoff at RI DEM. Members indicated they approved of scheduling such a workshop.

Old Business

Project, Committee and Council Member Progress Report Form: prior to the meeting P. August had prepared and distributed a video tutorial on how to fill out this form. Members agreed that the tutorial was helpful and that no further discussion was needed.

Committee Reports

1. Projects: the Committee has drafted a “Project Pre-Proposal Process and Submittal Form”. K. Donnelly has distributed it to a few members asking for feedback. The Committee intends to provide guidance on filling it out.
2. Information and Education: D. Migneault brought attention to the latest issue of the Dragonfly. He updated the members on progress with installing signage. He reminded members that P. August has asked members to submit photos for the notecards.

New Business

Town Updates:

- K. Donnelly reported that the Avalonia Land Conservancy has preserved a property stretching a half mile along the Green Fall River. It is proximate to various other preserved parcels. P. August suggested sending a thank you note to the Conservancy.
- K. Donnelly reported on Wyoming dam repair kayak closure dates. E. Caldarone attended a presentation on the repair at the Hopkinton Town Council. Since there is no federal funding involved and NPS is not involved, some members wanted the Council to have an alternative mechanism for notification of large DEM projects in the watershed. It was agreed to raise this with TeeJay Boudreau. One idea is to follow the DEM Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/RhodeIslandDEM>. P. August asked whether W&S should pull down our signs during construction.
- J. Ericson reported that Westerly has made two requests of the Council. The first is to participate in its stormwater survey, due August 1, which the town is using preparatory to a planned demonstration project in 2023, as well as letters of support for grants to support the project. The second is to assist them in developing a river overlay corridor for adoption into the zoning ordinance. These requests have been referred to the Advisory Committee.
- C. Heil reported that he investigated National Grid property on the Pawcatuck for a potential pullout, and that Hopkinton has formed a Potter Hill dam information committee, of which he is a member.

Good of the Order

- B. McCusker attended a RI Rivers Council meeting to understand further the status of DEM’s authority over water withdrawals from rivers. He previously found a drafted DEM policy which has never been formally adopted, and there are no existing regulations covering withdrawals (N.B. the DEM website indicates a Water Quality Certification is required for water withdrawals:

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/water/permits/water-quality-certification.php>). A major impediment to change is the existence of grandfathered uses.

Action Items

1. K. Donnelly reminded members of the scheduled June 29 paddle to learn about aquatic invasives.
2. B. Still invited members to volunteer for water quality committee.
3. C. Grube reminded members of the opportunity to contribute to preparation of the monthly agenda

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by B. Maietta, seconded by J. Ericson, and adjournment was approved at 7:03 PM.

Next Meeting: Fourth Wednesday of each month at 5 pm. Next meeting is scheduled for July 28, 2021.

