

Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council

Minutes

Meeting Held on July 28, 2021

In Attendance: Charlestown: Bob Maietta; Exeter: Nancy Quinlan; Hopkinton: Elaine Caldarone, Chip Heil; North Kingstown: Ahren Cohen; Richmond: Antonia Bryson, Pete August; South Kingstown: Bill McCusker; Sterling: Kim Gunn; North Stonington: Madeline Jeffery; Stonington: Fred Wagner; West Greenwich: Chris Grube, Pat Lardner; Narragansett Tribe: Cassius Spears, Jr.; Save the Bay: Dave Prescott; National Park Service: Lauren Bonatakis; Kassi Donnelly, Coordinator; Guest from RI Dept of Environmental Management: Jenny Paquet; Guest from University of Rhode Island Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials, Cooperative Extension: Lorraine Joubert.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

Presentation by Jenny Paquet, Rhode Island DEM

The Chair introduced Jenny Paquet, Senior Environmental Planner in the Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Program, Office of Water Resources, RI DEM. Paquet explained the concept of Low Impact Development, described its importance in preventing and mitigating nonpoint stormwater pollution, and explained the important role municipalities play in Rhode Island and Connecticut in adopting low impact development techniques through ordinance reform. Municipalities, with or without partnership support, are encourage by DEM to include increased LID principles in their ordinances, and to complete the municipal self-assessment, present results and propose amendments to town leadership bodies, hold public hearings, and enact the amendments. The Council could provide assistance in this effort by, at a minimum, letting towns know of its support for adoption of LID principles.

The Chair thanked Paquet for her presentation. Having ascertained that a quorum was met, he opened the meeting for Council business at 6 pm.

Secretary's Report: A. Bryson presented the draft minutes of the June 23, 2021 meeting. A. Cohen moved to accept the minutes as presented, and M. Jeffery seconded. There being no discussion, the motion was voted on and passed, with three members abstaining who had not been present at the June meeting.

Financial Report:

P. August presented the monthly financial report. There was little spending apart from expenditures for staff member K. Donnelly. B. McCusker moved to approve the financial report and A. Cohen seconded. There being no discussion, the motion was voted on and passed unanimously.

K. Donnelly reported that the budget had been submitted to NPS. NPS required a different format, with less detail, but did not request changes in the amounts. The budget has been re-submitted to NPS for approval.

Committee Requests

1. Advisory: the Committee requested approval of two letters of support for grant applications by the town of Westerly. One application is to the Southern New England Program for technical assistance with outreach and stakeholder engagement on its green infrastructure initiative, and the second is to the RI Department of Transportation for a stormwater improvement project known as the Downtown

Neighborhood Greenscape project. F. Wagner moved to approve both letters for submission, B. McCusker seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Committee Reports

1. Executive:

- (a) Hybrid Meetings: C. Grube reported on the status of the hybrid meeting format. K. Donnelly and P. August have worked to improve the internet connection. There are still problems with the audio equipment which need to be addressed before holding a full council meeting in a hybrid format. The Committee will be working on it, and it's possible that the hybrid format will be ready for the August council meeting. The Council will be following RI State guidelines with regard to COVID once hybrid meetings commence.
- (b) Dragonfly Express: the Committee is putting together an editorial board to share the responsibilities of producing the Express. It is hoped this will ease the workload on any one individual. An alternative is to reduce the frequency of issues or cease publication altogether. P. August asked if members found the Express useful, and most members present indicated they did. B. McCusker inquired as to how many open the email. P. August reported there is a good rate of opening. It was decided that publication would continue for a couple of months and the topic would be revisited.

2. Information and Education:

- (a) Note Cards: P. August thanked members who voted on the photo and painting candidates to be used on Council note cards. He showed the winners.
 - (b) Signage: B. McCusker reported that D. Migneault reached out to the town of Sterling about W&S signs and stimulated the interest of the First Selectman, who wishes to install them himself.
 - (c) Tabling: B. McCusker reported that the Committee will have a table with the W&S banner at the Charlestown farmers market on Friday, August 13. There will be an earlier test of the table at Hale House in Matunuck on August 11 at 6 pm. The Committee hopes members will volunteer to staff the table and help inform the public about the Council.
 - (d) D. Migneault mentioned to Loren Spears the Council's interest in being involved in the new Tomaquaug Museum site, and presented her with a W&S hat.
3. Questions/Comments: there were no questions or comments on the committee reports, which had been provided with the agenda for the meeting. These reports are included at the end of these minutes.

New Business

Town Updates:

- B. Maietta reported there has been no further progress on erecting signs in Charlestown.
- F. Wagner reported that Donahue Park in North Stonington has erected its sign.
- N. Quinlan reported that there will be an Exeter land trust committee meeting in August which will consider holding a land trust day, which W&S might be able to support.
- C. Grube reported that West Greenwich now has river signs in two locations.
E. Caldarone reported that the proposed solar energy system called Stone Ridge was approved by Hopkinton. Eighty acres of forest will be cleared for the system. She provided information on water quality testing to the town, which it is hoped it will consider. C. Heil has been active as a member of Hopkinton's committee on the Potter Hill dam project, which meets weekly.

Good of the Order

- B. McCusker inquired about extra print copies of Stewardship Plan. There are extras.
- K. Donnelly informed the membership that it has access to the front building on the WPWA campus. Members can use the building to store and pick-up materials, and can hold meetings there. Contact K. Donnelly or C. Grube for the door code. P. August noted that available hats have been moved to that space.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by F. Wagner, and seconded by B. McCusker. The motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:58 pm.

Next Meeting: Fourth Wednesday of each month at 5 pm. Next meeting is scheduled for August 25, 2021.

Committee Reports

1. Bylaws- No current activities, on hiatus.
2. Executive- Testing newly purchased hybrid equipment, speaker/microphone for \$100. Beginning an outline for Town Representative presentations to Town Councils, input welcomed. Future of Dragonfly Express to be discussed on 7/27, and an Editorial Board (subcommittee of the Executive Committee) led by Kassi may continue to publish this internal publication to educate ourselves on key watershed and Stewardship Council themes.
3. Projects- Pre-Proposal Process and Submittal Form has been discussed and revised after receiving feedback, continual editing in progress. Reminder to the Stewardship Council- once the new budget is approved and allocated by NPS, there will be small pots of funding for town initiatives.
4. Advisory- Drafted letters of support for grants sought by Westerly, due August 1st. Conservation Inventory has been roughly designed, once vision is complete the committee will be seeking GIS support for implementation. Request for funding approval is forthcoming. Reviewing Forest Action Plans of CT and RI for inclusion as resources to the Solar Best Management Practices (BMPs) document.