

Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council

Minutes

Meeting Held on August 25, 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; North Stonington: Madeline Jeffery, Dick Seager; Stonington: Fred Wagner; West Greenwich: Chris Grube, Pat Lardner; Westerly: Lauren Barber, Jon Ericson; CT DEEP: Eric Thomas; National Park Service: Lauren Bonatakis; Kassi Donnelly, Coordinator.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

Secretary's Report: A. Bryson presented the draft minutes of the July 28, 2021 meeting. F. Wagner moved to accept the minutes as presented, and P. August seconded. F. Wagner questioned the order of the paragraphs at the end of the minutes, and the question having been satisfactorily resolved, the motion was voted on and passed, with E. Thomas abstaining as he was not present at the meeting.

Financial Report:

P. August presented the monthly financial report. He noted that spending has been slow. The Council's 2020-21 budget has been frozen, which means that any new spending will now be allocated to new budget. The old budget will be audited and the amount of the rollover will be established. At present the rollover appears to be \$81,000. A. Cohen moved to accept the report, F. Wagner seconded the motion. There being no discussion, the motion was voted on and passed unanimously. P. August commended K. Donnelly for her work in reformatting the budget in response to NPS request. K. Donnelly informed the Council that the cooperative agreement with NPS requires that all funding must be spent by July 1, 2025. There will be little or no rollover after that date. C. Heil urged the Council to spend up to the limit, and suggested that at six months into the budget year it assess remaining funds and adopt measures to ensure those funds are expended. A. Cohen suggested a quarterly review.

Committee Requests

1. Advisory: the Committee requested approval of the disbursement of funds for a consultant to provide GIS support for a Conservation Inventory. The Committee has drafted a scope of work and estimated the cost at \$500. There was discussion of the different line items in the budget that can be used for GIS work. The \$500 will come from the Committee budget, which has over \$2,000 for GIS needs. Members were willing to consider approving the request but in the future will require a presentation of actual costs. P. August moved to authorize the Committee to spend up to \$500 for a consultant and F. Wagner seconded, and the motion passed with B. McCusker abstaining. E. Thomas asked about Council capabilities for GIS work in general, which P. August described as robust. The Council has an ARC GIS account and map data is already organized in one place. Members expressed interest in learning more about Council GIS capabilities and how it can be used to help towns.
2. Executive: the Committee is asking town representatives to seek agenda time during a Select Board/Town Council meeting in September, October or November. The representative will update the town governing body on W&S activities and offer Council collaboration in activities that implement the Stewardship Plan. The committee has provided an outline of points to be raised. E. Thomas suggested that a one-page handout also be provided as town government officials may have limited knowledge

about W&S. J. Ericson asked if the Council is ready to award the small grants mentioned in the outline. K. Donnelly indicated that the objective is to start a conversation with the town about applying for the grants. C. Heil surmised that Hopkinton will be interested in the grants for several town projects. He noted that one of those projects of which he is aware arises from Hopkinton's Potter Hill committee, and consideration of whether to award any grant will involve Council evaluation of the Potter Hill committee's goals.

Committee Reports

1. Projects:

Briggs Park: cost estimates for the concept plan received from engineering firms were \$2900 and \$4900. The higher estimate placed parking in a place that required a survey. The Hopkinton Recreation Commission endorsed the \$2900 estimate contingent on Council approval. P. Lardner moved to authorize the expenditure of \$2900 for the concept plan, and J. Ericson seconded the motion. The motion passed, with B. Maietta abstaining.

Kayak trail: K. Donnelly reported that the trail organizers have set an opening day and invited her as W&S to attend. She indicated there is room for paddlers to participate. E. Caldarone felt that W&S should not be represented at the opening as the organizers have issued a brochure which does not represent W&S Stewardship Council stakeholders. J. Ericson noted that the brochure is a product of conservation commissions of the towns, and that the Stewardship Council did not have a role in its development. J. Ericson noted the statement on wearing life jackets may not be approved by Westerly's Town Solicitor. E. Caldarone informed the members that she and C. Heil disapprove of the selected Hopkinton location for a put-in on the trail as it has inadequate parking and safety issues. F. Wagner reported the first selectwoman D. Cheseborough was not aware of the brochure. B. McCusker moves that the Council decline the invitation to attend, and A. Cohen seconds the motion, and the motion passed.

F. Wagner noted that the Council had previously allocated a budget of approximately \$18,000 for the kayak trail which, given these developments, will no longer be needed for that project. He updated the Council on Stonington's progress in seeking to acquire the parcel on the Pawcatuck River known informally as "the circus lot." The town has surveyed the lot and is seeking a landscape architect to do conceptual design for the lot. He suggested that some of the kayak trail budget be provided to Stonington to cover the cost of the landscape architect. M. Jeffery stressed the importance of land acquisition in protecting the rivers, and noted the good attributes of the lot. Other members agreed with this position and wanted to assist Stonington in finding funding. C. Grube endorsed the effort to work with the town independently of the kayak trail venture. B. Maietta felt that funds should be reserved for the town's actual purchase of the land. A. Bryson and P. August advised that more detail on the status of the town's efforts and the projected costs is needed prior to considering Council funding. It was agreed that the town representatives would put together a written account prior to further action. It was also suggested that the town could apply for the \$3000-4000 small grants that are about to become available to provide some support.

2. Information and Education:

B. McCusker reported that business cards have been printed. The outreach event at Hale House was well attended. The booth at the Charlestown farmers' market continues to be worthwhile, providing information on Council's activities and networking with other organizations. The committee also was present at a South Kingstown Waterfire, along with Friends of the Saugatucket. More events are

planned, including in Exeter on 10/16. The joint event with WPWA at Grey Sail Brewery will take place on 10/17.

B. Maietta and P. Lardner wanted wider distribution of the articles in the Dragonfly, such as sharing articles on Facebook or making it outward facing. C. Grube suggested that, though the production is now under control of an editorial board, the content could be returned to the committee for wider distribution.

New Business

Tabled due to time constraints.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by B. Maietta, and seconded by A. Cohen. The motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:13 pm.

Next Meeting: Fourth Wednesday of each month at 5 pm. Next meeting is scheduled for September 22, 2021.