

**Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed
Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council**

Minutes

Meeting Held on October 27, 2021

In Attendance: Exeter: Nan Quinlan; Hopkinton: Chip Heil; Richmond: Antonia Bryson, Pete August; North Stonington: Madeline Jeffery; South Kingstown: Dennis Migneault, Bill McCusker; Stonington: Fred Wagner; West Greenwich: Chris Grube, Pat Lardner; Westerly: Jon Ericson, Lauren Barber; Save the Bay: Dave Prescott; National Park Service: Lauren Bonatakis; Kassi Donnelly, Coordinator.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm.

Secretary's Report: A. Bryson presented the draft minutes of the September 22, 2021 meeting. P. August moved to accept the minutes as presented and P. Lardner seconded the motion. There being no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Financial Report:

1. Approval of Monthly Report

P. August presented the monthly financial report, with appended biweekly accounting summaries. F. Wagner moved to accept the report as presented, and M. Jeffery seconded the motion. There being no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

2. Spending approved funds

P. August recounted the past practice of the Council with regard to approving expenditures. The first approved budget contained gross categories of expenditure without much detail. It was felt that when actual expenditures were made, there should be additional Council approval. With more experience, categories of spending in the second budget were more precise. Given this improvement, P. August recommended that no additional approvals for expenditures be required, which will save time and unnecessary work, and be more efficient. P. August then moved to endorse the ability to spend without further authorization once a budget has been approved. D. Migneault moved to amend the motion to require further approval and a briefing of the Council for expenditures greater than \$5000. B. McCusker seconded the motion as amended. Discussion ensued. It was noted that NPS does not require any additional approvals once a budget is approved by them. The motion as amended failed with 3 votes in favor and 6 opposed. P. August then revived the motion to endorse the ability to spend without further approval funds in the budget and J. Ericson seconded. The motion passed with 6 in favor and none opposed.

3. Next budget cycle

K. Donnelly reviewed the current status of the 2020-21 budget. There is a total of \$84,246 in unspent funds of which \$66,562 was previously allocated to the 2021-22 budget. Of the remaining \$17,684, \$8,500 has been allocated to the community grants program in accordance with the decision taken at the September Council meeting, leaving \$9,184 unallocated. It was determined to leave the \$9,184 unallocated, requiring Council approval for its use. There was discussion about the amount of future funding from NPS. The Council (through WPWA) has a 5-year contract which provides [currently \$165,000 annually, dependent on Congressional allocations] and ends in 2025. K. Donnelly noted that the 2022/23 budget must be approved in February 2022 for timely submission to NPS. She will be contacting committees for information. Members who wish to propose projects should consult with her.

Committee Requests

1. Projects: K. Donnelly will be holding a workshop with project leads to assess the status of projects and to share information on progress made and difficulties encountered. All members will be invited to the workshop. Project leads have been asked to supply availability prior to the November Council meeting.
2. Executive:
 - a. Presentation to towns. C. Grube recounted his presentation to the West Greenwich Town Council. The Town Council showed great appreciation for the briefing and the experience reflected well on the Stewardship Council. C. Heil appeared before the Hopkinton Town Council and also reported that the presentation was well received. The handout provided by K. Donnelly answers questions that town councils might have. The presentations remind the councils that they are participants in the Stewardship Plan, and alert them to the new grant program. J. Ericson appeared before the Westerly Town Council with regard to the Potter Hill Dam study and was able to bring its attention to the letter submitted by the Council.
 - b. Stewardship Council meetings. C. Grube requested consideration of a new format for meetings, starting with the 2022 calendar year. An official Council meeting, with a set agenda and official minutes, would be held every other month. In the intervening month, there would continue to be a meeting, but that meeting would take the form of either a workshop, a presentation, or some other form of discussion of subjects important to the Council mission. The intervening meeting would not require as much preparation or follow up from the coordinator, would not require official minutes, and would allow the Council time to concentrate on substance rather than operation. It also might help recruit the next slate of officers by its less intensive work requirements. Discussion ensued. Members suggested topics for intervening meetings, including presentations by experts, delving deeper into a single issue, discussing how to accomplish Stewardship Plan goals, or providing more input on the activities of the watershed towns. F. Wagner moved to accept the new format as presented by the Chair, and C. Heil seconded. The motion passed with 6 in favor, 1 opposed, and 1 abstention.
 - c. Electronic voting: P. August requested the Council approve electronic voting in order to be nimble and avoid the delay of waiting for an official meeting to approve matters needing a vote. Voting to table the matter until the next meeting would be allowed. Effort would be made to provide information on the matter needing a vote as early as possible. F. Wagner moved to allow electronic voting and J. Ericson seconded. The motion passed with 9 in favor and none opposed. It was suggested that a fact sheet be provided with the request for a vote when possible.
3. Advisory: A. Bryson informed the members of the Committee's work with the Town of Westerly on the preparation of a River Corridor Overlay District. This is a zoning designation which provides additional protection for the river over and above the underlying zoning designation. L. Bonatakis has been working with Westerly to draft an RFP for a consultant to prepare a model ordinance for an overlay district and an ordinance specific to the town. Through town contacts, a consulting firm had provided an estimate of approximately \$14,000 for the work. The Advisory Committee decided to allocate \$14,000 from its budget to support this effort.

Committee Reports

1. Information and Education: B. McCusker referred members to the report contained in the agenda. C. Grube commended the committee for the excellent work it did in arranging and hosting the outreach event at Grey Sail Brewery.

2. Questions/Comments: there were none.

Next Meeting: Due to upcoming holidays, the November meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 17, 2021, at 5 pm. There will not be a meeting in December.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by P. Lardner, and seconded by N. Quinlan. The motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:19 pm.

