

**Minutes of the Rivers Council Meeting held
14 September 2005, 9:00 AM**
Conference Room B
William E. Powers State Administration Building
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present

Meg Kerr (Chair)
Stephen Kearns
Guy Lefebvre
Scott Millar (Vice Chair)
Kevin Nelson
Sharon Pavignano
Will Riverso
Jane Sherman
Mike Walker

B. Members Absent

Kevin Cute
Diane Feather
Elizabeth Gowell
Dale Grogan

C. Watershed Councils in Attendance

Ann Morrill, Kickemuit River Council
Greg Gerritt, Friends of the Moshassuck
Arthur Plitt, Friends of the Moshassuck
Christopher Freshett, Friends of the Moshassuck

D. Guests in Attendance

Tom Ardito, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, Narr Bay Journal
Cynthia Giles, CLF
Christopher D'Ovidio, CLF
Don Pryor, Brown University
Ari Matusiak, Rhode Island Foundation

CALL TO ORDER:

1. The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM

ACTION ITEMS:

2. **Approval of minutes July 13, 2005.** Ms. Sherman moved approval, seconded by Mr. Kearns, all approved.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

- 3. HousingWorks.** Mr. Matusiak distributed information on HousingWorks, a coalition committed to addressing the affordable housing crisis in RI. The coalition is working on three initiatives: state policy, public education and research. Last session, the coalition put forward \$4 million platform that was partially funded (approximately \$2 million). In 2006, the coalition is considering a bond referendum. The coalition believes that the State needs to participate in the production of affordable housing, and that smart land use policies need to be applied. Ms. Morrill questioned whether the need for affordable housing will use land that should be conserved for open space. Mr. Matusiak commented that HousingWorks respects the need for balance between development and conservation. Mr. Ardito asked how urban redevelopment is being addressed. Mr. Matusiak explained that the low/moderate housing act mandates development of state and local housing plans. These plans are focusing on development in areas with existing infrastructure and identified growth centers. Mr. Millar pointed out that the requirement for each town to make 10% of their housing affordable forces new development on rural towns. These towns do not have the existing infrastructure to support this development. Mr. Kearns mentioned that he works for the Women's Development Corporation, a company that develops affordable housing. Although they are doing several projects that redevelop existing sites, they are also involved in new developments in the more rural communities. The challenge is to develop working relationships between the housing community and the environmental community to work together towards a common goal – a quality place to live and work for all Rhode Islanders.
- 4. CLF Blackstone River Fishable Swimmable Campaign.** Mr. D'Ovidio provided a written report to the Council on CLF's progress. Major accomplishments include 1) CLF has worked with DEM on the multi-sector general permit (MSGP) for stormwater to unpermitted facilities in the Blackstone watershed. 2) CLF drafted a notice and comment request letter for use by watershed councils. Mr. Ardito asked about DOT involvement in the stormwater program. Mr. D'Ovidio explained that DOT is required to participate in the program and Ms. Giles acknowledged that advocacy work is needed to address stormwater impacts from DOT highways. Mr. Lefebvre thanked CLF for the report and for the sample letter.
- 5. Friends of the Moshassuck.** Mr. Gerrit presented the Rivers Council with copies of FOTM's application for recognition. The FOTM is a neighborhood group and their work does not embrace the entire watershed at this point. They primarily keep an eye on the river, conduct clean ups, etc. They just heard that a canoe launch project on Canada Pond will be moving forward. Ms. Kerr explained the Rivers Council review process. A committee chaired by Scott Millar will review the application and report to the Council at the October meeting. If approved by the Council, the designation will go to public hearing before becoming final. Ms. Kerr volunteered to work with Scott on the review and suggested Ms. Grogan as a possible third participant. Ms. Sherman made a motion to accept the application, Mr. Millar seconded and all approved. Mr. Nelson pointed out that the process is not consistent with the Council's review of applications in the past and recommended that the Council assure that the process conforms to our procedures.
- 6. Pawtuxet River Authority 2004 and 2005 Grants.** No one from the PRA was present to discuss their grants. Ms. Kerr summarized the September 8 letter from the PRA to the Council describing their use of the FY2004 grant. The PRA has expended only \$250 of the \$6,000 grant. Mr. Walker made a motion that the Rivers Council request the

remaining funds be returned to the Council. Mr. Nelson seconded. Mr. Kearns asked about the viability of the organization and Mr. Lefebvre explained that the PRA is chartered under state law and is involved in some large projects along the river. Mr. Millar said that he would be reluctant to withdraw the funds but would like to ask the PRA for a timetable showing how and when the funds will be expended. Ms. Sherman wondered if the PRA should reprogram the funds, perhaps for the fish passage project that is underway. Mr. Walker amended his motion to state that the Rivers Council will write a letter to the PRA asking them to attend the October Rivers Council meeting to report on the 2004 funds. If they do not attend, the Rivers Council will consider withdrawing the grant. Mr. Millar seconded the motion and all approved.

REPORTS

7. **Report from the Chair.**

- Ms. Kerr introduced Mr. Ardito, editor of the Narragansett Bay Journal (NBJ). The NBJ is a quarterly publication designed to educate citizens about the Bay. The upcoming edition will feature a centerfold map showing the watersheds of Narragansett Bay with information on each river and watershed council.
- Housing Plan. Ms. Kerr summarized a letter (August 16) from Mr. John O'Brien in response to the Council's request for input on the State Housing Plan. Mr. O'Brien has offered Ms. Blanche Higgins as a future presenter at a Rivers Council meeting. Mr. Millar stated that he is concerned about the unintended consequences of the housing plan. Will development be driven to areas of ecological concern? How will headwater areas be protected? Mr. Nelson recommended that Rivers Council members attend the State Planning Council meeting where the plan will be discussed. Ms. Sherman asked how the Rivers Council can play a more pro-active role in these planning initiatives. We are charged with protecting rivers and watersheds and promoting appropriate development. Mr. Nelson pointed out that the Land Use Plan is available on the DOA web site. Mr. Walker asked the Chair to invite Mr. Flynn the new Associate Director to the Rivers Council meeting to help the Council understand and explore our role in these important planning initiatives.
- Other initiatives. Ms. Sherman asked about other issues the Council should be watching. Mr. Millar recommended that the Council and Watershed Councils follow the regulations on how the open space bond funds will be used. He offered to provide information to the Council. Ms. Sherman asked whether Rivers Council comments were incorporated into the DEM Water Quality regulations.
- Ms. Kerr distributed a matrix of Rivers Council member expertise for the Council to review.
- Ms. Kerr reported that the Rivers Council received \$52,500 legislative grant for FY06.

8. **Report on Bay, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team and Metro SAMP.** Mr. Walker reported that the summer was slow with no new accomplishments to report.

9. **FAA Interagency Coordination Team.** Letters were received. The first meeting will be held in October.

10. **Funding/Development Committee.** Mr. Kearns distributed a written report. The committee has been reformed and includes Mr. Walker and Mr. Cute. They will present a draft development plan at the October Rivers Council meeting. Mr. Kearns recommends

that the Rivers Council postpone decisions on the legislative grant until the Rhode Island Foundation grants are announced in December.

11. **Legislative Committee.** Mr. Riverso offered to work on legislation for the Council. Mr. Ardito said that his work on fisheries restoration and habitat restoration show opportunities for better policies. He offered to work with the committee. Ms. Sherman recommended that the committee look at MA and CT for buffer protection legislation and policies.
12. **Policy Committee.** Ms. Sherman distributed a written report. Ms. Kerr announced that a special working group has formed to look at how the Rivers Plan addresses flow issues.
13. **Professional Development/Education.** Mr. Lefebvre reported that the watershed stewards program will start on Sept. 27 at the Peace Dale neighborhood guild.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:10 AM.

Next meeting October 12, 2005 at 4:00 PM