

**Minutes of the Rivers Council Meeting held  
11 October 2006, 3:00 PM  
Conference Room B  
William E. Powers State Administration Building  
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI  
*APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL 11-8-06***

**ATTENDANCE:**

**A. Members Present**

Joe Baer  
Meg Kerr (Chair)  
Guy Lefebvre  
Scott Millar (Vice Chair)  
Sharon Pavignano  
Jane Sherman  
Kevin Nelson  
Juan Mariscal (Will Rivero)  
Mike Walker

**B. Members Absent**

Kevin Cute  
Dale Grogan  
Patrick Hanner  
Stephen Kearns

**C. Watershed Councils in Attendance**

Ted Callender, SPC  
Chris Tompkins, Narrow River Preservation Association

**D. Guests in Attendance**

Heidi Green, QDC  
Claudia Staniszewski, RI LISC  
Don Pryor, Brown University  
Keith Gonsalves, Ten Mile River  
Richard Ribb, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program

The Chair called the meeting to order at 3:05 AM.

**ACTION ITEMS**

**1. Approval of minutes September 13, 2006**

Mr. Nelson moved approval, Mr. Millar seconded, all approve.

**2. Approve Revised Procedures with Secretary and Treasurer**

Mr. Nelson reviewed recommended changes to the RC Procedures. The language on Secretary and Treasurer were adapted from other organizations. Ms. Sherman recommended approval of the procedures as presented. Mr. Mariscal commented on the Treasurer, suggesting

that it might be good for Treasurer to report on a monthly basis. The Council briefly discussed whether this needed to be included in the procedures and decided that the report would be at the discretion of the Council. Mr. Rivero moves to approve, Mr. Millar seconded and all approved.

### **3. Present / review new staffing plan for Rivers Council – including agreement with NBEP**

Staffing Plan. Ms. Kerr presented the Council with new staffing plan. Ms. Sherman voiced concern that policy tasks would be postponed, urging the Council to think about how to handle policy work since it is a primary mission of the Rivers Council. Mr. Baer moved to support the plan, Mr. Nelson seconded, and all approved.

MOU. Mr. Millar stated that he would prefer having someone other than Ms. Kerr representing Rivers Council at Coordination Team. Mr. Nelson said that he was OK with the Chair representing the Council, but thought the item did not belong in the MOU. The MOU should define joint projects only. Mr. Baer said that he questions why the Council needs a MOU with the NBEP. Ms. Pavignano explained that the MOU clarifies the relationship between the two organizations for shared programs. Ms. Staniszewski said that a MOU helps clarify responsibilities.

The Council asked that the MOU include just the four joint projects (final revised MOU attached to minutes).

Mr. Mariscal raised questions about the powers of the Rivers Council. Nowhere in the enabling legislation is the Council given authority to enter into agreements. He is concerned that the Water Resources Board is ultimately responsible. He recommended that the Rivers Council ask for a legal opinion.

Ms. Pavignano moved approval of the MOU with the changes discussed. Ms. Sherman seconded and all approved.

### **4. Review and approve revised scope of work for Rhode Island Foundation 2007 grant proposal**

Ms. Pavignano presented. Several Council members (Kerr, Pavignano, Millar and Ted Callender) met with RIF's Debra Linnell. Ms. Linnell made it clear that the RC can not continue to ask the RIF for staff support. We need to show that we have a clear funding plan. After the meeting, Mr. Callender, Ms. Pavignano and Ms. Kerr met to define a revised workplan for the RIF that responded to Ms. Linnell's comments and this is the proposal before the Council for review. We emphasized two programs: 1) Watershed stewards and 2) Working with municipal government (which will link with DEM and NBERR). We also added a section on funding – we recommend creating a non-profit whose sole mission is to support RC programs. This model is used elsewhere. The National Park Service has a friends program that runs all the gift shops. South Kingstown has friends of Parks to supplement park programs. Master Gardeners have similar program.

Ms. Staniszewski asked if funders understand the fiscal agent relationship. She also wondered who would do the work to create the 501 c 3. Ms. Sherman asked who would staff the 501 c 3. Mr. Millar said that the RIF made it clear that we will only get funding if we show that we are determined to raise funds. Mr. Lefebvre said that we should be clear that the RC does receive

State funds and we need to address Juan's points. Mr. Ribb said that many NBEPs have created separate 501 c 3s to support them.

We postponed this discussion until the end of the meeting.

## **5. Review and approve 2007 fundraising plan**

This discussion did not take place.

## **6. Strategic discussion of Rivers Council (led by Joe Baer)**

Prompted by a change in Meg Kerr's employment status that reduces her availability and the uncertainty of RIF funding to hire additional staff, The Rivers Council decided to review its mission and activities. All participants agreed that without additional staff hours, the Council could not adequately support the range of projects currently managed by Meg. We agreed that sufficient volunteer or budgeted staff resources exist to meet legislatively mandated responsibilities and to fulfill existing programmatic obligations. How then to move forward?

Before consideration of *how* to manage the Council's operations and initiatives we focused on our mission and purpose. Consensus exists that, in the broadest terms, our mission is to protect rivers by developing policies and empowering watershed organizations to implement these policies. Opinions varied on what our mission tell us we should be doing (i.e.- Blueways, coordination of policy with State agencies), how to best empower watershed organizations ( i.e.- provide clearly articulated policy, training in the "notification rule", grants) and ultimately are we an advocate or educator? Many talking points mirrored the "Gifford Report" with the resulting list of possibilities but no conclusion.

The question of *how* to support various projects highlighted the weakening financial support from the legislature, tentative nature of pending RIF grant and general shortcomings in development. Should we create a separate 501c3 to pursue financial support, as suggested in a draft RIF proposal? Should we narrow our activities to the most important areas, most aligned with our mission? If so, should we limit the scope of our work or increase focus on our own capacity? Again, many talking points mirrored the "Gifford Report" with a list of possibilities resulting, but no conclusions.

The discussion concluded by dropping the suggestion of a 501c3 from the RIF grant and adding the one-year appointment of a part-time development officer to review funding options, including a 501c3. Consensus existed for continued inclusion of staff for the River Stewards initiative and advancement of "notification rule" strategies for the benefit of watershed councils.

## **7. Next meeting – November 8 at 9:00 AM**

## **8. Adjourn at 5:50 PM**

**Memorandum of Understanding**  
Between the Rhode Island Rivers Council  
and the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program  
*For the calendar year 2006*

**Purpose:** This Memorandum of Understanding between the RI Rivers Council and the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program defines management of projects that are shared between the two organizations. The RIRC and NBEP will partner on the following projects with NBEP providing staff support to manage them.

**Projects Defined:**

- Develop back office support services for conservation non-profits as co-lead of the Land and Water Partnership's Infrastructure Collaborative.
- Host training workshops for Watershed Councils and interested public on an as needed basis in coordination with the Land Trust Council and other partners.
- Develop Rhode Island's River Trail (Blueway).
- Organize and host 2007 Land and Water Conservation Summit with the RI Land Trust Council.

**Terms:**

1. Funds contributed to the projects by partner organizations will be managed consistent with existing organizational protocols.
2. Public materials associated with these specific projects will recognize the Rivers Council – Narragansett Bay Estuary Program partnership.

**Agreed:**

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**Rivers Council**

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**Narragansett Bay Estuary Program**