



**Minutes of the Rivers Council Meeting held
13 December 2006, 4:00 PM**

Department of Administration Conference Room B
William E. Powers State Administration Building
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present

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

B. Members Absent

Patrick Hanner

C. Watershed Councils in Attendance

Ann Morrill, Kickemuit River Council
Ted Callender, Salt Ponds Coalition
Keith Gonsalves, Ten Mile

D. Guests in Attendance

Rachel Sholly
Jennifer Styles, VCRI
Heidi Green, QDC

1. Call to order 4:05

ACTION ITEMS

2. Approval of minutes November 8, 2006

Mr. Baer moved approval, seconded by Mr. Nelson, all approved.

3. Approval of schedule for 2007

Mr. Millar moved approval, seconded by Mr. Baer, all approved.

4. Approve budget for FY07 Legislative Funds

Mr. Baer reported on changes made to the budget report, as per requests made during the last meeting. The report identifies allocations that are vital to the Rivers Council (RC) to meet its mandate and those that are optional expenditures. The largest allocation went to personnel, which would fund a "government affairs" staff person. The functions of this person would be to provide technical advice to the RC, work with legislature on tracking bills, represent the RC for future funding, build relationships, etc. This person would not be involved in programming.



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The subject was opened to discussion. Ms. Kerr added that we have not heard from RIF yet, but that grant is devoted to programs alone – Watershed Stewardship Program and strengthening watershed councils. Ms. Kerr spoke with Kathy Crawley at the Water Resources Board (WRB) and reported that they need the Rivers Council approved budget as soon as possible, as it could take some time to move the money out.

Mr. Walker questioned whether hiring personnel with legislature funding to secure more legislature funding is a good idea. Ms. Kerr replied that in a recent conversation with Ken Payne, he indicated that it is possible for the Rivers Council to use legislative funds to hire someone as long as acquiring more state funding is NOT their primary function. He also said that the legislature would like us to work with them on certain river projects (e.g. the current cesspool bill). RC personnel could follow legislation relevant to rivers, research and talk to the assembly about how it affects rivers, etc.

Ms. Sherman suggested that the title “government affairs” be dropped and that a more thorough job description is necessary. The new personnel should assist the RC in fulfilling its obligations as an effective state agency.

Mr. Baer suggested that the job description distinguish between what we need to do and what we want to do. He also asked if the legislative grant can be carried over. Ms. Kerr replied that they can take it back if it's left within the state.

Ms. Sherman commented that the RC should not spend money now because it's late, the legislature is busy, and late summer and fall are critical times. She also reiterated that the term “government affairs” should not be used. Mr. Lefebvre suggested the job title be “administrative assistant”, which the RC could use. Mr. Walker inquired about the timeline of spending. Mr. Baer said that the money must be spent by June 30, 2007, possibly with some carry-over. Mr. Walker advocated for the spending all funding by June 30, 2007 in order to be able to report that the RC has spent the money wisely.

Ms. Kerr reiterated that the WRB needs and approved budget in order to approve our spending of the funds. Ms. Kerr asked for a volunteer to come up with a job description for new personnel.

Mr. Nelson noted that he is concerned in principle that the RC feels the need to hire someone to work with the legislature. Mr. Nelson argued that the RC members should be doing that and shouldn't have to hire someone else.

Ms. Sherman suggested that the position be called “executive assistant.” She also noted that RC member responsibilities are unclear and that we should be able to bring legislation to the table.



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Ms. Kerr suggested a small committee be formed to work on a job description. She emphasized that the budget needs to be approved as soon as possible, or money will not be moved.

Mr. Millar agreed that the RC needs some kind of assistance, but is concerned about having no money left for building capacity. Spending funds on staff could put the RC in jeopardy of getting funds in the future.

Mr. Baer advocated against providing mini grants to watershed council in order to secure the RC's own capacity building first. Mr. Millar argued in favor of mini grants, saying that the legislature will be less likely to give the RC additional funds unless it reports real progress made through work with watershed councils. Mr. Nelson supports a paid executive director/assistant, but feels that the RC should continue providing mini grants and approach agency directors or testify to the General Assembly to acquire more staff, asking them to assign someone or provide more resources. Mr. Nelson supports both mini grants and legislative relations.

Ms. Kerr reminded the Council that maintaining even the minimum RC functions is time intensive. If the agency does not pay for it, someone needs to volunteer or it will not get done.

After some discussion, Ms. Sherman proposed that out of the \$40,000 remaining in non-fixed funding, the RC use \$20,000 for mini grants to watershed councils and \$20,000 for fund a staff person.

Mr. Millar suggested \$25,000 for watershed councils and \$15,000 for staff. Mr. Nelson would also rather see additional money going to watershed councils, because they should be at general assembly lobbying.

Ms. Sherman moved approval for \$20K for grants and \$20K for staff. On a voice vote, the motion passed (Ms. Pavignano, Ms. Sherman, Mr. Baer and Mr. Millar voted for: Mr. Lefebvre, Mr. Nelson and Ms. Kerr voted against)

Ms. Sherman and Mr. Baer volunteered to write a personnel job description and will try to have a draft for the January meeting.

5. Request from Watershed Councils to carry FY06 funds forward (S. Pavignano)

Ms. Pavignano reported that she has been communicating with watershed groups that have requested moving money forward to next year: 1) Moshassuck (continuing with designated budget), 2) Saugatucket (delays prevented spending of budget), 3) Woonasquatucket (funds intended for a video will be used for a newsletter instead), and 4) Kickemuit (buoy maintenance).

Mr. Walker asked why the Moshassuck funds should be carried over, as they have finished their projects. Extra funds from efficiency should come back to the RC. Mr. Walker stated



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that we should pay watershed councils for what they spend in producing deliverables. Ms. Pavignano noted that watershed councils have never been asked to report specific spending items. Mr. Baer suggested that Friends of the Moshassuck be asked to submit expenditure details. Ms. Pavignano commented that the explanations submitted by all groups are within guidelines of original grants.

Mr. Nelson moved approval, Ms. Sherman seconded, motion passed.

Mr. Walker, Mr. Rivero, and Mr. Nelson volunteered to create guidelines on how watershed councils can spend money, essentially creating grant program.

6. Secretary and Treasurer - Report from nomination committee and election (J. Sherman)

Ms. Sherman stated that adequate job descriptions are needed. The committee is making sure that the bylaws are up-to-date.

Ms. Sherman nominated Mr. Baer for treasurer, seconded by Mr. Nelson, all approved.

Ms. Sherman and Mr. Nelson are currently developing descriptions of member responsibilities for the four Rivers Council executive positions. Mr. Nelson added that there probably will not be any major changes.

7. Rivers Council web site – should new watershed councils be listed?

Ms. Sherman asked if there are any links to other organizations. Ms. Kerr responded that there are links to unaffiliated organizations. Ms. Sherman suggested that the undesignated watershed council website be listed in that section, separate from designated watershed councils.

REPORTS

8. Chair (M. Kerr)

Ms. Kerr briefly reviewed the Report from the Chair (at end of minutes). She reminded the Council that it is required by law to conduct new-member training, which would be good to do after the remaining seats are filled. Progress is being made on the Land & Water summit. It will be held on March 24th, 2007 and has 30 workshops lined up. The Blueways project is also moving along well. Ms. Kerr welcomed questions about the 2007 Workplan.

• **Report on Volunteer Leadership Program (J. Styles)**

Ms. Styles distributed a handout which described the Land and Water Partnership Collaborative Volunteer Management program for Rhode Island grassroots environmental organizations. The purpose of this innovative program is to help non-profits manage volunteers and to build a network of volunteers. The program currently provides services to the Rivers Council, the Land Trust Council, Woonasquatucket River



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Watershed Council, Barrington Land Trust, and several other Rhode Island environmental organizations. An upcoming expansion of this program will include a total of 18 RI groups.

Funding has been acquired for two staff, one part-time and one full-time, who will provide volunteer coordination services to the 18 groups. In order to receive these services, groups must fulfill certain expectations, such as designating a volunteer manager, tracking of volunteer hours, and volunteer recognition. A monthly newsletter announcing volunteer opportunities is distributed throughout the volunteer network. A website is being created, which will house all volunteer opportunities in the 18 groups. Ms. Styles also distributed copies of an example participant contract.

Ms. Kerr added that the Rivers Council wants to give presentations to watershed council boards regarding the volunteer program. E-mail Ms. Styles with possible dates.

9. Program Committee (S. Pavignano)

Ms. Pavignano announced that all materials from the 2006 Watershed Stewardship Program (WSP) are up on the website and instructor presentations will be up soon. Work is being done to organize the 2007 class and advanced trainings. Ms. Pavignano and Ms. Kerr are meeting with the RI Master Gardeners to discuss possible partnerships on these programs. Environmental Awareness Day at the Beach is still set for July 14th, 2007, but preparation no work has been done yet. RC Member Handbooks, containing everything a member needs in one place, will be distributed at January's meeting. The handbooks will be Rivers Council property, so each member will be responsible for adding new materials to keep it up to date. Ms. Sherman requested a detailed budget for the WSP. Ms. Pavignano will send a copy.

10. Funding Committee (J. Baer)

Mr. Baer reported that few changes have been made since last month. He briefly reviewed the report, going over restricted monies, expenditures and unrestricted funds. He also reported how much we have until WRB funds are disbursed. Ms. Morrill inquired about a form for end of year reports from watershed councils. Ms. Pavignano replied that it has been sent out.

The Council discussed the need to change grant report requirements to reflect changes to our legislation - submitting by end of September.

11. Policy Committee – Nothing to report

12. Legislative Committee - Nothing to report

DISCUSSION



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13. Discuss Rivers Council funding and legislative strategy for 2007

Mr. Baer noted that much of this discussion has already come up during the meeting, but introduced the general discussion topic: a strategy for funding and membership. Ms. Sherman agreed that developing a strategy is a good idea.

The Council discussed methods of connecting with the General Assembly to attract attention and funding. Members expressed the need for a “champion” in the General Assembly and to identify key legislators. Ms. Kerr noted that Eileen Naughton deserves credit for being that champion so far. Mr. Lefebvre added that Ms. Naughton has done well, but if she had more support she would be more successful. Ms. Sherman suggested that the RC draft a letter to the legislature that people can personalize and send to specified legislators.

Mr. Baer noted that requesting appointments for full membership should also be a top priority in communicating with the legislature. He suggested that the RC target two legislators for funding and two for confirmation.

Ms. Morrill offered to write to the legislature requesting the three needed appointments. Mr. Walker commented that sending Rivers Council representatives who also represent other agencies might be competing with ourselves (other agencies). There may be conflicting agendas depending on other member agency affiliations. Mr. Walker stressed that the RC cannot go unprepared and without common voice. Being disjointed and representing different agencies might backfire.

Mr. Baer reiterated that a strategy for leveraging must be developed. Ms. Kerr, Mr. Baer, and Mr. Walker volunteered to work on that strategy.

14. Policy – Next steps based on Council Review of Policy Plan Draft

Mr. Nelson reported that the policy committee is still deciding how to proceed on the final chapter of the Classification Plan, which remains unfinished. Mr. Millar has drafted an outline, but the committee has not had the personnel time to write and edit it.

Options: 1) take out appendix referring to Scituate watershed, 2) eliminate specifics – just write general information - need staff to research, or 3) wait for the Bay & Watershed Coordination Team plan to come out (it is a systems level plan and should be discussing watershed mgt in great detail).

Ms. Kerr will resend the chapter for the Council to review and discuss at the February meeting.

15. Next meeting – January 10th, 2007 at 9:00 AM

16. Adjourn 6:00 PM



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**Rivers Council
Report from the Chair
December 13, 2006**

ADMINISTRATIVE

- **Grants.** Grant reports are due in December for the 2006 RC grant.
- **Personnel.** We are working on a consulting basis with Rachel Sholly (administrative support) and Sharon Pavignano. Our agreement with the RINHS needs to be updated on January 1, 2007.
- **Rivers Council 2006 Annual Report.** Was due on October 1. Sharon is taking the lead on preparing a draft for Rivers Council review. Chair has notified Beverly Najarian that the report will be late.
- **Training.** Legislation requires that the RC conduct training for newly appointed and qualified members within 6 months after their qualification. Training should include 46-28, 42-36, 36-14 and 38-2 specified in our updated legislation.
- **Rules Coordinator.** We will re-file our notice rule after January 2, 2007.

RIVERS COUNCIL – NBEP PROJECTS

- **Infrastructure Collaborative – the Back Office Support project (members Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, Rivers Council, Westerly Land Trust, Barrington Land Conservation Trust, Land Trust Council).** Volunteer IMPACT grant was received and will start January 1, 2007. Donor/Member project is stalled and we are back to reviewing software. Volunteer project will be summarized by Jennifer Styles.
- **Land and Water Summit.** We have 7 workshops specifically for water topics. Four have been lined up: Blueway (John Monroe), How to understand and review permits (Don Pryor), the Stream Continuity Project (Chris Modesett), Protecting Vernal Pools (Jonathan Twining and Jim Gass). Three are still under development.
- **Water Trail project/Blueway.** Workplan for 2007 attached. We are doing outreach to outfitters this winter and will be finalizing the web site (funded by RIRC).