



The Rhode Island Rivers Council

c/o RI Water Resources Board
100 North Main Street
Providence, RI 02903

**Minutes of the Council Meeting held
April 25, 2007**
Conference Room C
William E. Powers State Administration Building,
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present

Joe Baer
Patrick Hanner
Guy Lefebvre
Scott Millar
Kevin Nelson
Sharon Pavignano
Will Riverso
Jane Sherman

B. Members Absent

Mike Walker

C. Appointed Members (not yet confirmed)

Ted Callender
Claudia Staniszewski

D. Watershed Organizations in Attendance

none present

E. Guests in Attendance

Kathy Crawley, *RI Water Resources Board*
Bob Vanderslice, *RI Department of Health*

F. Staff

Rachel Sholly

Call to Order: The Chair called the meeting to order at 3:10 PM.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Approval of minutes March 14, 2007

Ms. Sherman moved approval of the March 14, 2007 minutes, seconded by Mr. Lefebvre. All approved.

2. Approval of meeting notes April 11, 2007

Mr. Nelson reported that the meeting notes were not yet finalized. (He also explained that they should be referred to as meeting notes, not minutes, because there was not a quorum at the April 11th meeting.) Mr. Nelson will forward a copy to the Council, when the draft is completed.

3. Contract with the RI Natural History Survey (RINHS) to act as fiscal agent on RI Foundation funds

The contract was emailed to and reviewed by Council members in preparation for the April 11th meeting. Ms. Sherman moved approval, seconded by Mr. Baer. Ms. Pavignano explained that the RINHS will be the fiscal agent only for the Rhode Island Foundation funds which they have had since January, and not for Legislative appropriations. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Contract with Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council to act as fiscal agent on some legislative funds

The Chair reported that the \$50,000 in Legislative funds that is being held by the Water Resources Board (WRB) needs to be spent by July 1st. The WRB will handle the distribution of the \$20,000 for watershed council grants. However, there is still \$20,000 for Rivers Council salary, which cannot be spent in time. The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (WRWC) has agreed to handle these funds only. The contract is the same as the one held with RINHS, including a 7% administrative fee. Mr. Nelson moved approval of the contract with WRWC, seconded by Mr. Baer. All approved. Ms. Sherman abstained.

5. Grants to watershed councils (K. Nelson)

Ms. Pavignano, Mr. Walker, and Mr. Nelson reviewed grant applications from the Blackstone River Watershed Council (BRWC), Kickemuit River Council (KRC), Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA), Salt Ponds Coalition (SPC), Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition (SRHCC), Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA), and Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (WRWC). BRWC proposed a long-term anadromous fish restoration project and requested \$5,000 to begin planning. KRC offered two projects: 1) a blue tab project, in which dye would be flushed into septic systems to determine where illegal leakage was occurring, or 2) a children's workbook project. NRPA proposed a water testing project. SRHCC proposed three projects: 1) water testing, 2) development of signs along a river walk in Wakefield, and 3) a newsletter. WPWA proposed a mercury testing project. WRWC proposed a multimedia outreach project involving the Providence Place Mall. The total amount requested was \$32,375, however, the Council only has \$20,000 to award.

The grants subcommittee proposed \$5,000 be awarded to the Kickemuit Blue Tab Project, \$4,300 be awarded to NRPA for water testing, \$4,800 be awarded to SPC for water testing, \$4,900 be awarded to the WRWC for the outreach project, and SRHCC be

awarded a \$1,000 partial grant for the water testing and signage projects. These awards total \$20,000.

Motion: Mr. Millar motioned to approve the committee's recommendation in order to move on to discussion. Mr. Lefebvre seconded his motion.

Discussion: Mr. Millar asked if any watershed councils did not receive funding in the committee's recommendation. Mr. Nelson replied that the BRWC and WPWA projects were not recommended to receive funding. The BRWC fish restoration project would be a difficult and long-term project; the \$5,000 requested was just to get started will planning meetings and would need more resources actually to accomplish something on the river. Ms. Pavignano added that the Council had asked for short-term projects and this project did not fit that requirement.

Ms. Pavignano explained that WPWA requested funding for analytical fees, equipment, storage, supplies, and staff for a mercury testing project. They identified Jim Lake of the EPA as the person who would do this work. In a phone conversation with Ms. Pavignano, Dr. Lake said that he was not aware of WPWA's proposal, that it would be difficult for EPA to accept the funds, and that the EPA could do the work without this funding. These were reasons why WPWA was not recommended to receive funding. There was no further discussion. All approved. Ms. Sherman abstained.

6. Determination of RC role and responsibilities relating to activities, funding, and projects of Land and Water Partnership

The Chair reported that the Rivers Council received a letter from UPS requiring 1) the Rivers Council and the Land Trust Council to be leads on the Land and Water Partnership projects specified in the UPS grant, 2) a volunteer coordinator would be employed by, and work at, the Volunteer Center of RI and 3) the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association would act as the fiscal agent. If these requirements cannot be met by May 1st, UPS will rescind the funds.

Mr. Lefebvre expressed is concern that the Land and Water Partnership is not clearly defined; there is no document that establishes it as an organization. Mr. Lefebvre noted that if a partnership is to exist, the Rivers Council should also understand how the Land Trust Council (one of the L&WP partners) is established and should see copies of their annual report and budget.

Mr. Millar asked if any Rivers Council members wanted to see the grant returned or felt that the project is not worthy. The consensus from the ensuing discussion was that the project was worthwhile but the practical issues of dividing responsibilities among the "partnership" remain an obstacle. The responsibility for the disposition of the grant lies with three entities, not solely with the Rivers Council. Mr. Millar asked if it would be possible to meet with some of the key players to discuss the requirements in the UPS letter and to respond to grantor by May 1st. Ms. Pavignano reported that she has emailed the Land Trust Council chair with a request to meet.

The Council discussed the need to define the Land and Water Partnership as it relates to the UPS grant. Ms. Pavignano noted that the Partnership is defined in the grant. Mr. Baer stated that the Rivers Council has tried to seek clarification to decide how to move forward, but those efforts have not been met with a response. Ms. Pavignano felt that

the Council should enter into an MOU with the other organizations and a contract should be signed stating that WPWA was acting as the fiscal agent for the Rivers Council. The board of each organization will have to approve the contract by May 1st.

Mr. Millar read the requirements of the UPS letter: 1) the partnership agencies agree to continue to work with the Land and Water Partnership as described in the grant, 2) the Partnership will work through the Volunteer Center of RI (VCRI), and 3) the WPWA will act as the fiscal agent.

Motion: Mr. Millar made a motion to meet with the three parties named in the UPS letter (Rivers Council, Land Trust Council, and WPWA) and their board members to respond to the three requirements by May 1st, with the understanding that other concerns could be addressed after May 1st. The motion was seconded by Mr. Nelson.

Discussion: Mr. Callender asked what work is being done on this grant. Ms. Pavignano explained that in late 2003 and 2004, watershed councils met to discuss needs for organizational support. Two grants were received for a volunteer coordinator and software to help organize member and mailing list information. The software was made available to two watershed councils (the WPWA and the WRWC) and two land trust councils, including the Westerly Land Trust. A Volunteer Coordinator from VCRI has been sending out monthly volunteer newsletters and helping groups organize their volunteers.

Ms. Staniszewski asked what the agreement between the watershed councils and the Rivers Council included. Ms. Pavignano had not seen the contracts, but Ms. Sherman explained that the watershed councils agreed to share their volunteer lists, compile a list of experts, and share other relevant information, but there were no fiscal agreements. The Rivers Council will request that copies of these contracts, budgets, and any other relevant documents be provided at the meeting.

Mr. Baer stated that an agreement will need to be approved at the next Rivers Council meeting, but Mr. Millar did not think UPS was requesting an MOU. Ms. Staniszewski disagreed and thought that UPS was looking for a progress report or other compelling evidence that demonstrates that the Partnership is intact and the initiative is proceeding as planned. Ms. Sherman suggested that the Rivers Council authorize the submittal of an MOU to UPS now with the understanding that it will be approved at the next Rivers Council meeting.

Ms. Pavignano suggested that six people be present at the meeting: one staff member and one board member from each organization, and perhaps Ms. Kerr. Mr. Nelson did not agree that Ms. Kerr should be present; explaining that she is no longer part of the Rivers Council and it would be unfair to bring her into something from which she has decided to step away.

Ms. Pavignano returned to the motion and second on the floor and all members approved it. Mr. Nelson asked Ms. Staniszewski if she would attend the meeting on behalf of the Rivers Council and she agreed. Mr. Millar volunteered to attend the meeting if Ms. Staniszewski is not able to attend. Ms. Pavignano will email Ms. Urso, Mr. Friday, and the chair of the Land Trust Council.

7. Response to the letter dated April 13, 2007 from the Chair of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association

Ms. Pavignano distributed copies of a letter drafted by Ms. Sherman, Mr. Lefebvre, and Mr. Baer in response to the letter from WPWA. Ms. Pavignano reported that she has responded to the letter with an email to Ms. Urso saying that the Rivers Council would discuss the letter at this meeting and respond. Discussion ensued involving modifications to the letter.

Following a lengthy discussion, Ms. Sherman made a motion to approve the letter with the following revisions: a modification of the first paragraph as suggested by Mr. Nelson, the addition of dates, which will be provided by Ms. Pavignano, and a clarification of the \$12,000 match in the third paragraph. Mr. Baer seconded the motion with the understanding that the Executive Committee will finalize the letter and not send it until after May 1st. All approved.

REPORTS

8. Chair (S. Pavignano)

Mr. Callender and Ms. Pavignano met with the Rhode Island Foundation (RIF) to discuss possible grants for next year to work on a program for watershed health indicator data. Ms. Pavignano recommended that the Rivers Council not apply for the grant as a letter of intent is due next week and issues involving existing grants should be resolved prior to obtaining new grants. Ms. Sherman felt that it would be possible to submit a brief letter of intent and then withdraw if necessary. Ms. Pavignano was reluctant to send a letter of intent without first establishing a partnership with the watershed councils. Mr. Callender offered the alternative of applying for a RIF mini-grant of \$5,000 to get started and later apply for an RIF Strategy Grant. Most Council members expressed favor for applying for a mini-grant to begin preliminary work and consider a larger grant later.

9. Program Committee (G. Lefebvre)

Mr. Lefebvre reported that a Rivers Council advanced education program was held on April 17th at the North Kingstown Library. The program featured Beverly O'Keefe of the Water Resources Board and Alyson McCann of the URI Cooperative Extension. Ms. Pavignano reported that several former watershed stewards attended the event and asked good questions. Several individuals expressed interested in the next Watershed Stewardship Program.

Mr. Lefebvre also reported that planning is underway for the 2007 Watershed Stewardship Program, which will be focused on the Hunt River watershed in hopes of establishing a Hunt River watershed council. Environmental Awareness Day will be held on Saturday July 21st at the Narragansett Town Beach. Rachel has created attractive flyers and has been organizing participants. Mr. Lefebvre could not report on the status of the Land and Water Summit and Blueways Project at that time, as further clarification was needed.

10. Funding Committee (J. Baer)

Mr. Baer stated that the funding report was essentially imbedded in the discussions of fiscal agents earlier in the meeting. Mr. Callender asked if the Council would receive Legislative funds for the next fiscal year. Mr. Baer replied that after speaking with the House Finance Committee, the Rivers Council seems to be in good shape. Mr. Lefebvre

spoke with a legislator who understood that the Rivers Council is seeking clarification of responsibilities.

11. Policy Committee (J. Sherman)

Ms. Sherman had nothing to report.

12. Legislative Committee (W. Riverso)

Mr. Riverso reported that a Senate subcommittee approved the passage of the cesspool bill.

DISCUSSIONS

13. Status of Rivers Council membership

The Council has received letter saying that Ms. Staniszewski has been appointed, but she and Mr. Callender are still not confirmed.

14. Review and discussion of possible funding opportunities

This item was discussed in the Chair's report.

15. Status of Blueway Project

Ms. Pavignano reported that the only funds put into the Blueway Project have been Rivers Council funds. A grant from the National Park Service has provided the Council with John Monroe's (a NPS employee) time and expertise over the past year. Bruce Hooke has been paid to create and maintain a website. There will be an all-day workshop on Saturday, April 28th at Slater Mill. Ms. Pavignano has offered Mr. Hooke some assistance from herself and Rachel Sholly.

16. Other business

Mr. Lefebvre asked about the status of the new Water Resources Board office. Mr. Riverso reported that they might be moving to the DOA building. Ms. Pavignano added that Juan Mariscal is committed to providing the Rivers Council with office space and handling the Rivers Council's finances next year.

Adjournment: Mr. Nelson moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:34 PM, Ms. Sherman seconded, and all approved.

Next meeting – May 9, 2007 at 9:00 AM