



The Rhode Island Rivers Council

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

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Minutes of the Council Meeting held

June 13, 2007

Conference Room B

William E. Powers State Administration Building,

One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present

Joe Baer

Guy Lefebvre

Scott Millar, *RI Department of Environmental Management*

Kevin Nelson, *RI Statewide Planning*

Sharon Pavignano

Will Riverso, *RI Water Resources Board*

Jane Sherman

Mike Walker, *RI Economic Development Corporation*

B. Members Absent

C. Appointed Members Absent (not yet confirmed)

Ted Callender

Claudia Staniszewski

D. Watershed Organizations in Attendance

Ann Morrill, *Kickemuit River Council*

E. Guests in Attendance

Ames Colt, *RI Coordination Team*

Keith Gonsalves, *Ten Mile River Watershed Council*

Heidi Green, *Quonset Development Corporation*

Bruce Hooke, *B.G. Hooke Consulting*

John Monroe, *National Park Service*

F. Staff

Rachel Sholly, *Program Assistant*

Call to Order: The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM.

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ACTION ITEMS:

1. Discussion and vote on meeting notes April 11, 2007 (no quorum)

Ms. Sherman moved approval of the April 11, 2007 meeting notes; Mr. Nelson seconded the motion. Mr. Lefebvre requested that the following sentence be inserted into the meeting notes: "Ms. Pavignano reported that the Rivers Council received a letter from the National Human Services Assembly, which stated that the Rivers Council has managerial responsibilities to the grant." Ms. Sherman amended the motion to reflect Mr. Lefebvre's revision, Mr. Nelson seconded and all approved.

2. Discussion and vote on meeting minutes April 25, 2007

Ms. Sherman moved approval of the April 25, 2007 meeting minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Nelson. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Discussion and vote on Rivers Council Blueways Project plans for 2008

Ms. Pavignano gave a brief background of the Blueways Project. The Rivers Council entered into partnership with the National Park Service (NPS) to develop a water trails program -- the Blueways Project. Mr. John Monroe of NPS was assigned to the project to provide technical assistance. The Rivers Council hired Bruce Hooke, who also volunteers for the Blueways Project to develop a website. Re-application for technical assistance from NPS is necessary, as the current agreement will expire soon. The Rivers Council must decide if it wants to re-apply.

Rivers Council officers have met several times to review and discuss the project. Their recommendation is to complete the website and turn the project over to other organizations because the Rivers Council does not have the staff to maintain the project. The officers have a tentative agreement that the Blueways Project be passed on to NPS, who will seek to organize a "Blueways Alliance" of interested parties to continue the project. A notification letter will be sent to all parties involved and all watershed councils will be given a chance to contribute data. Mr. Hooke suggested leaving open who hosts the project. Ms. Pavignano agreed, adding that the project should remain in public domain.

The Chair recommended that when Mr. Hooke completes the website, the Rivers Council formally pass on the product to NPS, who will continue the project in the public domain and decide what next steps should be taken. Ms. Sherman made a motion to approve turning the Blueways Project over to NPS under conditions to be determined and approved by the Rivers Council after the completion of the contract with Mr. Hooke. Mr. Baer seconded the motion and all approved.

4. Discussion and vote on RI Senate document *Water for Tomorrow: From Planning to Implementation* and proposed changes to the RI Rivers Council

Ms. Pavignano explained that the water supply bill proposes moving the Water Resources Board (WRB) and the Rivers Council to the Department of Administration (DOA) under the Division of Planning. This bill also proposes transferring the Rivers Council's authority to award grants to watershed councils and to designate and re-designate watershed councils to the State Planning Council. Mr. Nelson explained that the Rivers Council would be an advisory board to the State Planning Council, but it would not have authority to make decisions.

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Ms. Sherman stated that she does not oppose the organizational transfer into DOA but believes that the entire section on changes to Rivers Council should be deleted, explaining that there is no apparent reason for the changes. The Rivers Council has closer relationships to the watershed councils than the State Planning Council could and understands what they go through. Ms. Sherman felt that the changes will create more work for Statewide Planning and watershed councils will get short-changed.

Ms. Pavignano suggested that the Council present reasons why it should be allowed to continue its job. Mr. Baer expressed concern about the origins of this decision, explaining that someone has an interest in changing authority. Mr. Lefebvre said that the decision came out of the Senate Policy Office, which is headed by Ken Payne. Mr. Millar suggested that the Chair send a quick email to Mr. Payne and asking for the rationale behind these decisions.

Mr. Lefebvre suggested that the Council send a letter to the leadership involved saying that the Rivers Council is fine with moving to the DOA, but the other changes seem unnecessary. Ms. Sherman added that the Council should express concern about adding responsibilities to the State Planning Council. Ms. Pavignano added that the Council should outline its accomplishments with watershed councils, because there may be people involved in writing the legislation that are unaware of the Rivers Council's successes in supporting the watershed councils. Mr. Lefebvre mentioned that Sandra Whitehouse said that the General Assembly has noted that Rivers Council produces an annual report every year, when other similar councils do not.

Ms. Sherman made motion to write a letter to be approved by the WRB General Manager to be sent to the General Assembly which states that the Rivers Council is in general support of addressing the water supply issues of the bill, but it does not support those portions of the bill that call for reorganization of Rivers Council powers. Mr. Baer seconded the motion.

Mr. Colt felt that the legislation will not be passed this session but will return for consideration during the next session. Mr. Colt suggested holding two meetings before the letter is sent. First meet with Mr. Mariscal to discuss how the WRB is approaching this and whether the Rivers Council should approach Ken Payne with the WRB or separately. The second meeting should be with Mr. Payne or Senators Sosnowski and Lenihan. Mr. Baer recommended that the Council consider holding two full Rivers Council meetings during the summer to discuss this issue. Mr. Lefebvre felt that the letter should be sent as soon as possible.

All voting members approved the motion except Mr. Nelson, who abstained because his Department had not yet decided its official position.

REPORTS:

5. Chair (S. Pavignano)

Ms. Pavignano gave a brief report on meetings about the Blueways Project, the final budget, and approved payments to watershed councils. Most other things to report were program-related.

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6. Program Committee (G. Lefebvre)

Mr. Lefebvre reported that the Rivers Month Calendar was created and emailed and is on the Rivers Council website. The Council's next event (June 19th) is a class on Fish Restoration in Rhode Island, featuring presentations by Phil Edwards (DEM) and Joe Bachand (NRCS) as well as a "tour" of the Kickemuit River Fish Ladder. The Environmental Awareness Day at Narragansett Beach is July 21st. Ms. Pavignano has arranged for six beach staff members to help with the day and is working with a local grocery store to provide food to participating organizations. Ms. Sholly is recruiting and organizing group participation. Ms. Pavignano also reported that the Council has purchased an email distribution program called Constant Contact, which Ms. Sholly has been using to create HTML email announcements for events and updates.

Planning is progressing for the fall Watershed Stewardship Program, which will focus on the Hunt River watershed where there is a newly forming watershed group. Using feedback from past watershed stewards, 11 classes have been planned, including several field days. The goal for this year is to create a standard program that meets the needs of the whole state and could potentially be run by volunteers in the future.

7. Funding Committee (J. Baer)

Mr. Baer reported on the status of incoming expenditures. There have been some budgeted expenses, and a couple incidental carry-over funds with RINHS. The 2007 legislative grant has been split up so that the WRB dispenses watershed council grants and the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council (WRWC) pays Ms. Sholly. Supplies have been ordered through the state purchasing system, thanks to the WRB.

Mr. Baer also reported that the Rivers Council has not received reconciliation from the Rhode Island Natural History Survey (RINHS) for several months. Ms. Pavignano has called to request the reconciliation and explained that they will probably send it by the end of the week.

The Pawtuxet River Watershed Council (PRWC) has not been submitting monthly invoices as required in order for them to remain eligible for the remainder of their 2005 grant award. Accordingly, the Rivers Council will notify the PRWC that their 2005 grant funds will be rescinded and Mr. Baer will move those funds to unrestricted status in the next report.

Adjournment: Ms. Sherman made a motion to table the remainder of the agenda and adjourn the meeting so members could attend the appointment hearings of Mr. Callender and Ms. Staniszewski at the State House. Mr. Nelson seconded and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 4:57 PM.

Next meeting: July 11, 2007 at 9:00 AM