



The Rhode Island Rivers Council

c/o RI Water Resources Board
Department of Administration
One Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908

Minutes of the Council Meeting held July 11, 2007

Conference Room C
William E. Powers State Administration Building,
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members Present

Ted Callender
Guy Lefebvre
Scott Millar
Kevin Nelson
Sharon Pavignano
Will Riverso
Jane Sherman

B. Members Absent

Joe Baer
Claudia Staniszewski
Mike Walker

C. Watershed Organizations in Attendance

Rita Holahan, *Pawtucket River Authority*
Anne Morrill, *Kickemuit River Council*

D. Guests in Attendance

Ames Colt, *RI Coordination Team*
Juan Mariscal, *RI Water Resources Board*

E. Staff

Rachel Sholly

Call to Order:

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:08 AM.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Approval of the Minutes of Past Meetings

The Chair requested a motion for approval of the minutes for the June 13, 2007 meeting. Ms. Sherman moved and Mr. Lefebvre seconded approval of the minutes as submitted. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Discussion and vote on proposal for update to Rivers Council website

Ms. Pavignano distributed copies of a proposal for website updates and gave a brief background of the Rivers Council website (www.ririvers.org). She explained that the Water Resources Board (WRB) staff person, Rob Christina, who had been maintaining the website but could no longer continue and has given Ms. Sholly and the Rivers Council the site access information along with the website code and files.

Ms. Pavignano requested a price quote from a contractor used by the WRB to update the website. The response was a quote for \$1,040 (at \$53 an hour). Ms. Sholly has also offered her services to update, redesign, and expand the website, doing more work at a lower cost (per hour). Ms. Pavignano suggested that funds used to update the website come from the rescinded Pawtuxet River Authority 2005 grant.

Mr. Nelson commented that as a State agency, the Rivers Council must abide by State purchasing rules, which entail obtaining three quotes and awarding the contract to the lowest bidder. Mr. Millar mentioned that this contract may not have to go out to bid because it is a small amount.

Ms. Sherman made a motion to allocate \$2,000 to update and add content to the website, and to authorize Ms. Pavignano to work with the WRB to ensure that the process is in compliance with state purchasing procedures. Mr. Millar seconded the motion. All approved.

REPORTS

3. Chair (S. Pavignano)

The Chair reported that she has been working with Ms. Sholly and Mr. Callender on partnering with the Hunt River Watershed Council to plan this fall's Watershed Stewardship Program. The group is also working on Rivers Council activities and displays for next Saturday's Environmental Awareness Day.

4. Program Committee (G. Lefebvre)

Ms. Pavignano elaborated on the Watershed Stewardship Program planning. The Hunt River Watershed Council has suggested allowing participants to choose to attend a portion of the classes offered. Quonset Development Corporation (QDC) has offered their meeting room for indoor classes. They are currently deciding on a day of the week to hold the classes.

Mr. Lefebvre reported that the West Warwick River Walk is hosting a gala opening on August 12th. He will forward the event information to Rivers Council members.

Ms. Pavignano mentioned the new ban on smoking on public beaches, and asked if anyone knew someone who could come to the beach day to talk about it. Mr. Millar will talk to his colleagues.

Ms. Sholly reported that the Advanced Training on fish restoration in Rhode Island held at the Kickemuit Fish Ladder was a success. Approximately 30 attendees, including a few Watershed Stewards, watched presentations by Joe Bachand (NRCS) and Phil Edwards (RIDEM) and toured the Kickemuit Fish Ladder. Anne Morrill was thanked for helping to advertise for the class, bringing food, and giving a great introduction.

5. Funding Committee (J. Baer)

Mr. Millar asked if the 2007 Legislative funds have been transferred to the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council yet. Mr. Mariscal reported that a check was sent, but it was addressed to the wrong Woonasquatucket group. A new check is being sent. Ms. Pavignano reported that all grant monies have been allocated to watershed councils, but several have not yet received checks. Mr. Millar noted that in the financial report it would be helpful to see the total amount of funds that have been allocated and not allocated. That way the report reflects the entire amount of funding that the Rivers Council is working with. Ms. Pavignano reported that the Rivers Council has allocated almost \$20,000 to watershed councils, but the Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor decided that they could not take the grant. That money was added to the Salt Ponds check, leaving \$600 not allocated. The total amount of 2008 Legislative funding received is \$44,847.

6. Policy Committee (J. Sherman)

Ms. Sherman had nothing to report, but said that she and Mr. Nelson would discuss next steps. Mr. Nelson suggested that the Rivers Council seek a volunteer who could spend time researching policy and making phone calls. Ms. Pavignano asked Mr. Nelson to write a brief description so that Ms. Sholly could include it in the August eNews. She added that if any other members think of Rivers Council volunteer opportunities, they should let Ms. Sholly know and she will include them in eNews as well.

7. Legislative Committee (W. Rivero)

Mr. Rivero reported that the cesspool phase-out bill passed and was signed by Governor Carcieri. The bill will be effective as of June 2008.

DISCUSSION

8. Pawtuxet River Authority – briefing on proposed concrete batching facility and update on the PRA (Rita Holahan, PRA)

The Chair introduced Rita Holahan, a new board member of the Pawtuxet River Authority (PRA). Ms. Holahan reported that one of the PRA's main projects is opposing the completion of the Cullion Concrete Plant due to its impact on wetlands and location in a floodplain. The site is within 750 feet of the confluence of the Pawtuxet and Pocasset Rivers

Appeals are underway challenging the permitting involved in the approval to construct the facility. The primary challenges are to the building permit (appealed for zoning hearing) and insignificant alteration to wetlands permit. Citizen groups also oppose the facility based on noise pollution, air pollution, and traffic. Furthermore, Cranston's Comprehensive Plan calls for the area to be open space.

Ms. Holahan then turned to an update of PRA activities. Projects include a fish ladder proposed in Pawtuxet Falls, a canoe launch on the border of Warwick & Cranston, a river buffer restoration project, major clean-ups, and lots of dead tree removal. She noted the major problem in the Cranston/Warwick area is with run-off. The good news is that there is not too much trash on river.

Ms. Sherman made a motion to write a letter expressing the Rivers Council concern over the effect that the concrete plant could have on the health of the Pawtuxet River. Mr. Lefebvre seconded, all approved. Mistery Callender and Lefebvre volunteered to conduct a site visit, draft a letter, and send to Council for review.

9. FY08 budget – legislative funds and their use

Approximately \$44,000 has been allocated to the Rivers Council as a WRB as line item for Watershed Council grants. The Council raised an important question concerning this funding: Is the funding reserved for grants only or may the Rivers Council use a portion of the funds for operating expenses?

The Council then discussed aspects of a 2007-2008 funding round: 1) RC will need status reports from the current grant awards, 2) should the RC carry over existing grant criteria or make changes, 3) how to time grant awards with requirements for annual reports, how much to allocate for grants. The first priority is to determine how much discretion the Council has in use of the funds. Ms. Pavignano will request Treasurer Baer to research this issue.

10. Legislative relations

Ms. Sherman suggested that the Rivers Council begin to formulate legislative priorities now and begin to communicate with legislative leaders *before* the session that begins in January. The RC Officers agreed to meet or start creating a priority list through email.

11. Status of Rivers Council membership

We have two vacant positions, one to be filled by a representative of a Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Pavignano noted that the Council could use someone from Blackstone area. Ms. Sherman volunteered to look into the Northwest Chamber of Commerce.

Other business:

Ms. Sherman announced that Citizens Bank has awarded the WRWC the champion award. The 903 Apartments is sponsoring a golf tournament to benefit WRWC.

Mr. Lefebvre noted the NBEP Status and Trends Assessment process is building a large comprehensive website; The RC should pay attention to that process and provide feedback.

The Council decided to cancel the August meeting.

Adjournment:

On a motion by Mr. Nelson, seconded by Mr. Callender, the meeting adjourned at 10:45 AM.

Next meeting – September 12, 2007 at 9:00 AM