



Rhode Island Rivers Council

c/o RI Water Resources Board
235 Promenade Street
Providence, RI 02908

Meeting Minutes
June 9, 2010
RI Department of Administration
Conference Room B
Providence, RI 02908

ATTENDANCE:

A. Members present

Emily Cousineau
Guy Lefebvre, Chair
Lisa McGreavy
Charlie Vandemoer

B. Members absent

Ted Callender
Paul Gonsalves
Claudia Staniszewski
Jane Sherman
Mike Walker

C. Guests present

Ames Colt
Ann Morrill

1. Call to Order:

Chair Mr. Lefebvre called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

2. Review and approval of the minutes for the May 12, 2010 meeting

The minutes were distributed to the council prior to the meeting. A vote to approve was postponed until the next meeting.

3. Recommendations regarding draft Integrated Plan (for Narr Bay Watershed & SW RI)

Mr. Lefebvre welcomed to the meeting Ames Colt, Chair of the RI Bays, Rivers & Watersheds Coordination Team (CT). Mr. Colt described the Integrated Plan (IP) process and emphasized the importance of the Rivers Council providing input to the process as a member of the CT and thus the Advisory Committee to the IP process which will hold its first meeting on June 16th at Save the Bay in Providence. He said a basic schedule goal is to develop an IP by 2011 and then to take this IP and further integrate existing state guide plans related to the bay, rivers and nonpoint pollution abatement. Mr. Lefebvre inquired how the IP would differ from the *RI Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Systems Level Plan, 2009 - 2013* (SLP) aside from that the IP would include parts of Massachusetts that are in the Narragansett Bay watershed. He said that the SLP was a compilation and focused summary with priorities of state water related plans including the economy. Ms. Cousineau inquired about water supply issues such as those related to the Big River Management Area and the Kent County Water Authority. Mr. Colt said it was important for the Water Resources Board to bring their issues to the IP process. Water supply as related to minimum flow standards was identified as a relevant issue to be

addressed. Mr. Lefebvre inquired about how the Watershed Restoration (Total Mass Daily Load, TMDL) Plans developed by EPA & DEM would relate to the IP. Mr. Colt said that the water quality element of the SLP addressed these plans well which could be emphasized in the IP process. Mr. Lefebvre inquired about the Providence Water Supply Board's ownership of the Scituate Reservoir system that supplies drinking water to about sixty percent of the state. He noted from time to time he reads articles in the newspaper about Providence city councilmen proposing that the reservoir system be sold to cover city pension plan deficits. He said he also recalled the chair of the Narragansett Bay Commission (NBC) examining the feasibility of NBC owning and operating the reservoir system. Mr. Colt noted that one agency in Massachusetts operates both water supply and wastewater systems for the Greater Boston area. Mr. Lefebvre expressed concern about the reservoir system being sold by Providence to a private company who would likely minimize infrastructure investment and maximize rates. He said he was also concerned that Providence could sell the reservoir system for too low a price such as six hundred million dollars when it could be worth more than two billion dollars. He said he thought the IP should address the state keeping the reservoir system as a public entity. Mr. Colt said that given the reservoir system supplies sixty percent of the state, addressing this matter in the IP process makes sense.

4. Location change for Pawtuxet River project grant

Mr. Lefebvre said that the location change was very close in proximity and that rather than a boundary survey, the Pawtuxet River Authority & Watershed Council wanted to use the funds from this year's grant round for similarly related acquisition costs such as title search and environmental review. He said he thought that Secretary/Treasurer Claudia Staniszewski could authorize the change in her capacity as chair of the grants committee. Members concurred.

5. Appointment of committee to review spatial elements of designation criteria

Mr. Lefebvre provided council members a designations summary. He said that redesignation of groups representing the Kickemuit, Moshassuck, Pawtuxet and Woonasquatucket will be due for renewal in 2011. He said he received an email from Mr. James McGwin of the Hunt River Watershed Association who indicated his group would be interested in a facilitation process with the Friends of the Hunt River Watershed (FHRW) group. No communication from FHRW has been received. Mr. Lefebvre said he would contact FHRW this summer and inquire if they were interested in a facilitation process. If so, the council could vote on a modest appropriation (approximately five hundred dollars) at an autumn meeting for this purpose. Mr. Lefebvre also said that a committee was needed to address the spatial elements of designations (surface boundary delineations made by the federal government in relation to groundwater aquifers) as well as review the designation criteria more generally. Mr. Vandemoer said he thought provisions should exist for being able to address local special circumstances. Ms. McGreavy and Mr. Vandemoer volunteered to serve on this committee. Mr. Lefebvre appointed them to the committee and said he also appoints Mr. Gonsalves to this committee pending his acceptance. He said other members not present could also serve should they wish to participate.

6. Climate change policies update

Mr. Colt said that the Coastal Resources Management Council has formalized an approach to sea level rise. Ms. McGreavy noted that there is a greenhouse gas stakeholder group in the state that developed an action plan in 2002. RI is part of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) which is a group represented by Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states working to reduce carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to climate change. Mr. Lefebvre said that URI has a climate action plan for its four campuses that particularly addresses energy efficiency. Mr. Colt noted that the RI House and Senate have both passed the *RI Climate Risk Reduction Act of 2010* (HR7719) that would establish a twenty-eight member commission (three each: senators, representatives; two each: municipal government,

environmental organizations, chambers of commerce, higher education; one each: DEM, CRMC, DOT, BRWCT, DOH, WRB, OSP, EMA, SBldgC, utilities, realtors, builders, architects, medical professionals.) It was noted this bill would establish a commission that had senators and representatives as members, similar to commission memberships established prior to the more rigorous separation of powers amendments implemented throughout state government about five years ago. The bill awaits the signature of the governor.

7. Historical watershed information

Mr. Lefebvre provided council members the cover page and a map from a report entitled: *The Influence of Physical Features upon the History of Rhode Island* by David Hoyt (Providence: RI Department of Education, 1910) which is about thirty pages long. Mr. Lefebvre noted from this report that the ten foot elevation contour lines for the State of RI appear to have been determined and mapped in the 1880's. He also said that this report states that the Pawtuxet River once likely fed Greenwich Bay before the last ice age when the outlet was blocked and the river was diverted northeastward to its present location. Mr. Lefebvre said he thought this might be true, has searched for several years, and this is the first time he has found this geological possibility in writing. The map included in the report illustrates eight river basins: 1 Pawcatuck, 2 Pawtuxet, 3 Woonasquatucket, 4 Moshassuck, 5 Abbott's Run, 6 Ten Mile, 7 Warren, Barrington and Runnins, and 8 Blackstone and Seekonk. Mr. Lefebvre noted that Abbott's Run was cited as different from the Blackstone River watershed. He noted that it was interesting that the council upon request gave support for a CARE grant application from the Northern RI Conservation District to the EPA to study and organize efforts for stewardship of the Abbott's Run watershed. He said the council should look more closely at the Abbott's Run basin in relation to the Blackstone River watershed because Abbott's Run may not be a subwatershed of the Blackstone River watershed. Council members expressed interest in getting copies of the report and making a pdf file. Mr. Lefebvre will work with Ms. Cousineau to expedite reproduction and distribution.

8. Appointments

Mr. Lefebvre said both Ms. Susan Escherich and Mr. Walter Galloway have submitted application materials to the governor to become members of the council. He also noted he submitted a letter on their behalf to the governor last month. He has not heard of the appointments being made. He also said that the General Assembly adjourning early makes Senate confirmation in the near future unlikely.

9. Officer reports

Mr. Lefebvre reported that he received an email from Alicia Lehrer, executive director of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council and fiscal agent for the council that said WRWC received a check from the state in the amount of \$2,243 for the council's administrative portion of the FY2010 state appropriation. Mr. Lefebvre thanked Ms. Cousineau for her efforts to expedite this payment. He said that the council now has approximately \$5,400 on hand less any accounting fees. Mr. Lefebvre said he was assembling a council directory to facilitate communication among council members and entities with whom the council interacts. Mr. Lefebvre reported he did send the letter to RIEDC interim executive director Keith Stokes about naming the Chipuxet and Usquepaug Rivers on the state tourism / highway map as well as examine the map generally for improved river identification. No response has been received to date.

10. Committees and other business

Ms. McGreavy reported on several questions the council inquired about over the past several months in regard to the severe flooding that occurred in late March and early April. Regarding the council's

question about the state's no net loss of wetlands policy, she reported that DEM OWR principal environmental scientist Carol Murphy said:

It is federal policy, the goals of which DEM implements, through adherence to avoidance and minimization requirements in the state wetland rules as well as through the promotion of voluntary protection and restoration. We report on wetlands loss and gain every other year in Status and Trends reports. A pretty well understood and very important contribution of wetlands is that they protect people and property from the hazards of flooding. We do not know the extent of historic loss of freshwater wetlands in RI (such as historic filling for industrial development along RI's rivers some of which may have been in wetlands) or loss between 1971 (the passage of the state wetland act) and 1988 when we began to track. The extent of wetland per watershed summarized from the RIGIS wetlands data (1988 base photography) is posted at <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/water/wetlands/wetwat.htm> (see table 2).

Regarding update of FEMA maps, Ms. McGreavy provided a follow-up to the council's May minutes to further clarify FEMA flood map updates. When Bristol County received new DFIRMS (digitized Flood Insurance Rate Maps) in March 2006, the update was simply a digitization of existing data. When Providence County received new DFIRMS in March 2009, the update was primarily a digitization but also included some new data and elevation changes for the Blackstone Valley area. The following summarizes updates at the present time:

Bristol County received new DFIRMS with updated digitization but no data/elevation changes in March 2006;
Providence County received new DFIRMS with updated digitization but no data/elevation changes except for some changes in the Blackstone Valley area;
Kent County will receive new DFIRMS with data/elevation updates possibly by 2012 – data is being collected now;
Newport County will receive new DFIRMS with data/elevation updates possibly by 2012 – data is being collected now; and
Washington County will receive new DFIRMS with data/elevation updates possibly by 2012 – data is being collected now.

In relation to Low Impact Development (LID) initiatives, Ms. McGreavy also reported that the DEM Sustainable Watersheds Office has posted the following publication titled: *The Need to Reduce Impervious Cover to Prevent Flooding and Protect Water Quality, May 2010* <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bpoladm/suswshed/pdfs/imperv.pdf> This publication was distributed at two workshops held in May called "Preventing Flooding and Impacts to Water Quality ... What Does Impervious Cover Have To Do With It?" In addition, DEM Sustainable Watershed Office and the NBRR is planning a workshop on community low impact development in the fall. The target audience for the LID workshop is planners and planning board members, but conservation commissioners and watershed organization members are welcome to attend.

The council discussed a summer schedule. A July meeting will be held as scheduled on July 14th if summer scheduling circumstances do not warrant cancellation. Mr. Vandemoer offered to host the August meeting on Wednesday, August 11th at the Kettle Pond Visitor Center in Charlestown. Council members were enthusiastic about having a meeting in Charlestown to be followed with pizza and salad.

The meeting adjourned at 6pm.