



## MINUTES - Connecticut River Joint Commissions Meeting

Monday, June 4, 2012

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Parish House of First Congregational Church, Haverhill, NH

NH Commissioners Present: Bob Ball, Rebecca Brown, Bob Christie, Donna Drouin, Robert Harcke, Cleve Kapala, Joan Monroe, Mary Sloat

VT Commissioners Present: Chris Company, Emma Zavez (proxy for Peter Gregory), David Snedeker (for Alison Low), Bev Major, Gary Moore, Gayle Ottmann, Rick Hopkins (proxy for Michaela Stickney), Brendan Whittaker

Administrative Staff/Consultants: Rachel Ruppel and Yutian Zhang

Members of the Public: Rick Walling, Riverbend Subcommittee Chair/Bath; Bernie Folta, Claremont; Bill Schomburg, Headwater Subcommittee/Columbia; Jim Doig, Riverbend Subcommittee/Newbury; Glenn English, Haverhill; Judith Howland, Mt. Ascutney Subcommittee/Hartland.

Company, President, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Introductions were made.

Christie made a motion to accept the April 16, 2012 minutes as written, with a second by Ottmann – motion passed unanimously.

The two State Commissions each held a caucus to elect officers for FY13. The NH Commission reported that they had elected Rebecca Brown as Chair, Bob Ball as Vice Chair, Mary Sloat as Secretary/Treasurer, and Bob Christie as the representative at-large to the Executive Committee. The VT Commission reported that they had elected Chris Company as Chair, Gayle Ottmann as Vice Chair, and Tom Kennedy as Secretary/Treasurer. Brendan Whittaker volunteered to serve as Vermont's representative at-large to the Executive Committee, which was accepted by the VT Commission.

Moore made a motion to elect CRJC officers as follows: Rebecca Brown as President, Chris Company as Vice President, Tom Kennedy as Secretary, Mary Sloat as Treasurer, with Bob Christie and Bren Whittaker as representatives-at-large to the Executive Committee. Ottmann seconded – motion passed unanimously.

Ruppel presented an overview of proposed bylaw amendments. There were no question regarding the role of the Executive Committee. Regarding the Local River Subcommittees, Jim Doig questioned whether the quorum definition (50% of participating municipalities) was too high of a hurdle and suggested a 10% quorum instead. Discussion ensued about what a reasonable group number should be for a quorum, with Sloat recommending that CRJC try the

50% quorum for 6 months to see if it works. She also noted that the Local River Subcommittees can send informal comments “as the consensus of those members present” if there is no quorum. Monroe noted that permit review is best done as a group discussion. Whittaker noted that correspondence to towns seeking new representatives should be phrased as an invitation. Brown recommended that riverfront Commissioners consider serving as town representatives on the Local River Subcommittees; Moore recommended that a Commissioner could fill one seat, if both seats can’t be filled. Glenn English noted that Subcommittee members need projects to work on, that former Commissioners may be a good source for recruitment to local Subcommittees, and that CRJC needs to cultivate a relationship with towns. Moore moved to adopt the bylaws as drafted, with a second by Sloat – motion passed unanimously.

Campany left the meeting at this point; newly elected President Brown chaired the remainder of the meeting. Drouin asked for recognition by the Commissioners to thank Campany for his work this year – the Commissioners voiced their gratitude.

Moore moved to authorize Rebecca Brown as a signatory on CRJC’s bank account with Lake Sunapee Bank, with a second by Major – motion passed unanimously.

Moore moved to confirm the nominations of the following Local River Subcommittee members: Craig Allen of Westminster, Larry Gatto of Fairlee, Barbara Rhoad of Windsor, Judy Howland of Hartland, and Karen Moore of Bradford. Ottmann seconded – motion passed unanimously.

Ruppel presented the draft Strategic Plan for the organization, developed over the past year. Sloat moved to adopt the CRJC’s Strategic Plan, with a second by Kapala. Discussion ensued. Hopkins asked how this strategic plan fits in with the National Blueway designation; Ruppel responded that the Blueway designation is for recognition of the watershed’s assets and emphasizes partnerships – this fits in well with the Strategic Plan outreach work, especially Goal 5 to address up-and-coming issues. Walling noted that he was pleased to see the Recreation Plans scheduled for printing as well as the identification of the next chapter to be updated – he stated that this will help generate interest for people to become involved in Subcommittees. Brown noted that it is important to share this strategic plan with the towns and other partners; she asked for volunteers to help create a communications strategy to get this information out to towns. Ottmann, Drouin and Sloat volunteered to help plan the outreach. Commissioners recommended having a federal staff person come to the next CRJC meeting to talk about the Blueway designation and understand its implications and potential for funding local projects. English stated that federal dollars for sewage treatment infrastructure had really cleaned up the river in past decades, but noted that these facilities now need to be replaced or upgraded; he recommended that CRJC consider this to be an up-and-coming issue for discussion with federal agencies. With a motion on the floor, Brown called for a vote to adopt CRJC’s Strategic Plan – motion passed unanimously.

Zavez noted that HUD (Housing and Urban Development) funding is available for resiliency planning, and could potentially be used for economic development or major infrastructure projects.

Moore moved to adopt the FY13 budget as written, with a second by Ottmann. Christie noted that CRJC's budget in past years had been ~\$500,000, but now is \$70,000 and recommended that CRJC concentrate its efforts on other source of funding beyond state annual appropriations. Motion passed unanimously.

Moore moved to accept the UVLSRPC subcontract for FY13 administrative and program support, with a second by Christie. Major noted her thanks to UVLSRPC for their services this past year. Whittaker reported an immense improvement to CRJC's operations thanks to staffing by UVLSRPC and to supporting the Local River Subcommittees. Folta noted that CRJC's increased expectation of professionalism enhances public confidence for the organization. Motion passed unanimously.

Ruppel asked the Commissioners about the timing of a river clean-up at Fiddlehead Island near Bath/Ryegate. Consensus was to hold the clean-up as part of the Source to Sea riverwide cleanup event coordinated by Connecticut River Watershed Council. Drouin commented that Source to Sea is a major event in CT and MA, but not as established in NH and VT. Walling stated that Riverbend Subcommittee might be a co-sponsor of the Fiddlehead Island site. Sloat commented that other Subcommittee could sponsor sites local to their areas.

Ruppel presented information on the proposed outdoor classroom/wetland boardwalk at Keene Middle School; Keene Middle School contacted CRJC to see if we could partner with them and is currently asking for a general letter of support for the project. Moore moved to authorize the CRJC President to write a letter of support, with a second by Kapala – motion passed unanimously. Christie noted that CRJC's mission includes education for future generations and that this is a good opportunity for CRJC to engage with schools. Brown noted that schoolkids could become involved in river clean-ups.

CRJC discussed new member recruitment; Ruppel reported that David Deen and Tara Bamford are awaiting confirmation by Governor Shumlin (VT). There are currently 4 open seats for Vermont and 6 in New Hampshire. CRJC Commissioners agreed to continue to contact potential members.

CRJC discussed the 2012-2013 meeting schedule. It was agreed that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays from 10am to noon are convenient. CRJC members suggested holding winter meetings at central locations and summer meetings at more "adventurous" locales.

Commissioners' comments: Brown reported that the Montshire Museum will host a special exhibit on water, with an opening reception on. Ottman reported that the Connecticut River Byway Council is planning their annual meeting for July, and that they are working on a strategic marketing plan and their harvest supper. Ottman added that VT Agency of Transportation and VT Division of Travel and Tourism are meeting this week to discuss the state's Scenic Byways.

Subcommittee comments: Bill Schomburg reported that the Headwaters Subcommittee has voiced their opposition to the Northern Pass project and asked what CRJC's position is on the subject. Sloat replied that CRJC had written a letter last year echoing the concerns of the CRWC; Moore added that CRJC wanted to wait to see the plans and facts prior to deciding their position. Schomburg reported that many non-profit organizations in the state have come out in opposition to this project. Folta noted there are constraints on public advocacy by non-profit organizations and public bodies. Whittaker reported that the Headwaters Subcommittee is very active and CRJC has taken positions on previous issues such as ATV use limits. Schomburg stated that local North Country communities are not in support of the project, and asked CRJC to take a more proactive stand on the Northern Pass. Walling agreed that CRJC should be involved with commenting on the Northern Pass project. Brown asked that CRJC take up this issue for debate at their next meeting.

Public comments: Folta commented that he would like to see the Connecticut River Byway Council and the CRJC rejoin.

Ruppel reported that TRORC has received a request from Colebrook for additional signage to be purchased through the current Byway signs grant. TRORC is the project manager for this grant, but CRJC is the prime recipient – CRJC must authorize any changes to the project scope; TRORC does not know if VT Agency of Transportation will allow a project scope change this late in the project. English noted that if one town is requesting more signage, that the offer should be extended for all towns; he recalled that a few years ago, towns had to pare down their original requests to fit the budget. CRJC Commissioners requested that Peter Gregory of TRORC contact all towns to see if they would be interested in additional signs.

Meeting adjourned at 12:05 pm.