



MINUTES - Connecticut River Joint Commissions Meeting
(unapproved)
Tuesday January 22, 2013
3:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Norwich Public Library, Norwich, VT

NH Commissioners Present: Bob Christie, Donna Drouin, Michael King, Elaine Levlocke, Jim McClammer, Brendan Prusik, Aaron Simpson, Rick Walling

VT Commissioners Present: Tara Bamford, Chris Company, Peter Gregory, Tom Kennedy, Gary Moore, Brendan Whittaker

Administrative Staff/Consultants: Rachel Ruppel

Members of the Public: Sharon Francis, citizen from Charlestown, NH; Bill Jewell, Town of Westminster, VT

Company, Vice President, called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm. Introductions and announcements were made:

- Whittaker announced that Rebecca Brown is working on a NH bill to allow a quorum by electronic participation.
- Francis announced that John Tucker, a founder of the NH Commission, and his wife, Carol, were in a major auto accident this fall, but are now recuperating at home.
- Walling announced that Riverbend Subcommittee is having better and better attendance and new prospective members; they are looking for projects or speakers to keep up the interest at meetings.
- Drouin announced that a Walpole nomination to the Wantastiquet Subcommittee is underway. The Wantastiquet Subcommittee has good attendance and participation, and noted that they are interested in a Source to Sea Cleanup this fall.

Kennedy moved to accept the Nov. 19, 2012 minutes as written, with a second by Simpson – motion passed unanimously, with King and Levlocke abstaining.

Ruppel presented the slate of Local River Subcommittee members to be confirmed, as follows:

- Riverbend Subcommittee – Michael Monaghan and Ken Hunter of Monroe, NH
- Mount Ascutney Subcommittee – William Manner of Springfield, VT
- Wantastiquet Subcommittee – Joe Conroy of Hinsdale, NH and Alice Maes of Putney, VT.

Moore moved to confirm the nominations as presented, seconded by Gregory – motion passed unanimously.

Ruppel presented the Program Manager's Report. Drouin asked about the role of Local River Subcommittees in project review. The Commissions discussed that NH state law RSA 483 establishes the CRJC and its Subcommittees as advisory bodies – they provide comment directly to NHDES on state environmental permits, and are also encouraged to participate in and provide advisory comment in local permitting decisions as well as VT state permitting. Jewell noted that any group can seek party status through the VT Act 250 process, which provides the

opportunity to comment and also to appeal. Ruppel noted that Subcommittees can also bring problems to the attention of the State who has enforcement authority. The Commission also discussed that CRJC can choose to elevate a local issue, and take a formal position on it.

Ruppel presented the financial report as of December 31, 2012. Gregory provided an update on the Byway Signs grant close-out process – Haverhill has been asked to submit its match documentation, and there is one sign each to be installed in Brattleboro, White River Junction and Wells River. He stated that VTTrans may be willing to close out the project with signed letters from the Towns confirming that they will install the signs this spring. Ruppel shared the draft financial compilation; the Commission discussed the merits of an audit versus a compilation. The Commission requested additional time to review the financial compilation. King moved to accept the December financial report, with a second by Kennedy – motion passed unanimously, with Levlocke and Drouin abstaining.

Ruppel stated that a compilation of bills were sent to all Commissioners; the next step is for the volunteer Commissioners from each state to review these and consider if CRJC should write a letter or testify. It was noted that more bills will be forthcoming in Vermont; they are not released until after the bills have been read. McClammer recommended that CRJC watch a few bills closely – a revision to the Shoreland law, bills related to Northern Pass and utility lines, and two bills about coastal management in a changing climate. He noted that CRJC may need to act quickly, as hearings are often scheduled on short notice. Whittaker stated that VTANR is expecting new water quality regulations from EPA Region 1; Company noted that VTANR just released the draft Act 138 report, which identifies water quality issues and assigns a \$156M price tag on addressing those issues, and he stated that there are implications for the management of both Lake Champlain and CT River Basins. The Commission also discussed draft roads codes and standards in VT, which include new standards for ditching. Whittaker recommended that Commr. Mears come to speak about the CT River basin's management and impact of any new regulations. McClammer noted that the water quality standards in NH have now expired, and recommended that Commr. Burack come to speak as well. Jewell suggested that CRJC talk with transportation officials, as road management impacts water quality.

The Commission discussed briefly the status of the tar sands pipeline. Moore noted that there are two bills in the VT legislature relevant to this. Whittaker noted that local residents are organizing a demonstration in Lancaster. Ruppel will ask Bob Ball to send an update via email.

Whittaker presented an update on the Northern Pass. He shared a front-page Colebrook Chronicle article (1/18/13) entitled "This One Sells for \$5 Million: Another Clarksville Property Sold to Northern Pass." He stated that this project is very divisive in the North Country. He stated that bills have been introduced in the NH Legislature by Hon. Larry Rappaport. Bamford noted that the Headwaters Subcommittee has requested that CRJC take a position on the Northern Pass; the Commission discussed how to proceed. King stated that once Northern Pass establishes a route, the NH Site Review Committee will have review and approval authority. Francis reported that SPNHF believes they have blocked a route for aerial lines through Coos

County, and suggested that CRJC focus on the river crossing and advocate for a state-of-the-art river crossing. Moore stated that CRJC should only support or oppose the project within the watershed, and not in total or on principle. The Commission assigned the Executive Committee to look into the potential effects of Northern Pass on the CT River watershed and report back.

Campany presented a proposal from the Executive Committee for the CRJC to take an active role in the FERC dam relicensing, as a bi-state entity focused on the river issues and with a published River Management Plan. This will involve seeking outside funding to help staff CRJC's involvement. King stated that during the Fifteen Mile Falls relicensing, the management plan was not mentioned, and now there is the opportunity to make this relicensing more community-oriented. Whittaker spoke in favor of the proposal and asked "if CRJC doesn't do this, who will?" Drouin stated that this could be an opportunity to improve historic village of Bellows Falls; she noted that Vilas Bridge has been closed. Francis stated that she was glad to hear of CRJC's commitment to participate, and opined that CRJC can elevate concerns and influence of local citizens and communities. Francis suggested that any plan should use the best science and climate modeling, as greater volatility in precipitation is predicted. Kennedy noted that the Executive Committee has asked UVLSRPC to amend its work program for this current fiscal year to focus on this issue, which would be a departure from the strategic plan. The Commission discussed the upcoming scoping meetings next week, and that study requests are due by March 1. The Commission decided to review study requests at the February 11th Executive Committee meeting, with other interested Commissioners participating. King moved to empower the Executive Committee to set position for submitting study requests to FERC, seconded by Walling. Discussion - Drouin asked about the workplan change, and Campany responded that UVLSRPC's two priorities would become supporting the Subcommittees and the FERC relicensing. There being no more discussion, Campany called for a vote – all in favor, motion passed unanimously.

Whittaker stated that he failed to mention earlier that his understanding is that Northern Pass is a private business venture that has nothing to do with New Hampshire's power needs. King explained the role of the New Hampshire Site Review Committee; it was noted that local planning boards are pre-empted from reviewing projects like Northern Pass.

Walling stated that the fixes and improvements at the Gilman Dam boat ramp have lead to a rise in boater usage.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.