

DRAFT

Minutes of Connecticut River Assembly Meeting

**Wethersfield Town Hall
505 Silas Deane Highway
Wethersfield, CT 06109**

January 14, 2010

Attendance:

Members

Joseph Smith, Chairman	Wethersfield
William B. Garner	Enfield
Philip H. Benoit	Rocky Hill
Mark Quinlan	Governor's Representative

Others

Mary Ellen Kowalewski	CRCOG
Stephen Sorrow	Suffield

Roll Call

At 7:10 p.m., Chairman Smith announced the lack of a quorum, and suggested that those present proceed with a brief and general discussion of agenda items. No actions could be taken at this meeting due to the lack of a quorum.

Update on Rocky Hill Foundry Site

This item was discussed next, as the Rocky Hill representative had to leave the meeting early. Mary Ellen Kowalewski reported information received from Barbara Gilbert, the Rocky Hill Town Manager on the various legal actions that the town is taking to acquire control of the Foundry property, and achieve its clean-up. Most of what has transpired regarding the Foundry in recent months has been a topic of Executive Session and therefore cannot be discussed. It is likely to be a long legal process. Staff will provide more information as it becomes available.

Adoption of Minutes: December 10, 2009

The minutes could not be adopted due to lack of a quorum.

**Update on Grant to Study Creation of a
Lower Connecticut River (MA/CT) Joint Commission**

Mary Ellen Kowalewski reported on her January 5, 2010 meeting with staff of other RPO's covered by this project. All CT and MA RPO's along the Connecticut River were represented, except for the Midstate Regional Planning Agency in Middletown.

The following key points of discussion and consensus from the January 5th Meeting were shared with the CRA:

Bi-State Goals

- CRCOG staff shared comments made by the CRA at its December 2009 meeting.

- There is lots of consistency between regions regarding goals for the river.
- Upriver, there tends to be more concern for impoundments created by dams, and their impact on ecological systems and recreation.
- There was general support for better monitoring and testing of water quality in the river, and also for getting better information on recreational usage.

Survey to Identify Bi-State Goals and Strategies

- Rather than use a survey (phone, email, etc.) to get input on goals for the river area, those present suggested having one or two stakeholder meetings that could be used to obtain information on bi-state goals and strategies. Results from other recent efforts, such as the Trust for Public Lands Listen to the River Project, should be included in such a meeting.
- The purpose of the stakeholder meeting(s) would be to identify 3-4 topics that all RPO's can work on.

Organizational Structure

- There was little support for creating a new bi-state joint river commission, such as the New Hampshire/Vermont Joint River Commission.
- Instead, there was consensus to work through the existing RPO's through a less formal partnership.
- It would be possible to draft a MOU between agencies that would describe the objectives of the effort, and individual agency roles.
- Funding and ability to sustain anything more formal than this was questioned.

Small Grant Program

- It was suggested that whatever type of grant program is established, it should fit into the priority action areas identified through the stakeholder(s) meetings.
- Those present suggested that the grant application/award process be kept simple.
- Some suggested that it might be better to have fewer grants that have a bigger impact, than lots of small grants.
- Some favored pathfinder type grants, which invite innovation.

Mapping

- There was support for better mapping of river and adjacent lands, and a sharing of GIS data among regions.
- There was some discussion of how commercial map products and Connecticut River Watershed Council maps and river guides might already provide much of what is envisioned in the mapping component of this project.

Staff will report back to the CRA on this project, as decisions are reached on how to proceed.

Membership Update and Discussion of Schedule/Strategy for Filling Vacancies

Mary Ellen Kowalewski stated that the three-year terms of most members expire in 2010. The members serve until replacements are appointed. Currently, there are three municipal vacancies: East Hampton, Glastonbury and Suffield. Mr. Sorrow of Suffield

who has been attending recent CRA meetings hopes to be appointed as the Suffield representative soon.

Due to the CRA's ongoing problems in achieving a quorum, Ms. Kowalewski suggested that the request for appointments reinforce the need for towns to appoint people who will actively participate. If the municipalities are not willing to do this, they should consider withdrawing from the organization. Those present concurred with this approach. The requests for appointments would go out as soon as possible.

Other Business

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.