



**Minutes  
Connecticut River Joint Commissions  
September 28, 2009  
Lebanon City Hall  
Lebanon, NH**

**Attending:**

**NH Commissioners:** Cheston Newbold, Hank Swan, George Watkins, Robert Harke, Nancy Franklin, John Tucker, Mary Sloat, Bill Roberts

**Vermont Commissioners:** Beverly Major, Steve Walasewicz, Norm Wright, Michaela Stickney

**Staff:** Sharon Francis, Brenda Ash, Adair Mulligan, Rebecca Brown

**Guests:** Deb Weymouth, NRCS; Tom Linnell, Hanover citizen; Bernie Folta, Claremont; Bob Paquin, FSA; Tom Berry, Sen. Leahy staff.

**Bev Major, chair**

**1. Minutes of July 27, 2009.** Norm Wright motion to approve, Hank Swan second. Unanimous.

**2. Introduction of Brenda Ash, new business and office manager.** There were 12 applicants and four interviewed twice. We warmly welcome Brenda. Also noted with appreciation that Nancy Franklin brought apples for all.

**3. Frequency of CRJC meetings.** Sharon explained that this topic is a result of a communication from Gary Moore. She had not seen a copy, but understood that Gary was concerned that as full CRJC meetings have become less frequent, more decisions are being made by the Steering Committee (SC), without participation by all commissioners. Norm Wright said that from further discussion with Gary, his concerns also include that all commissioners do not see all of the financial statements that the SC does. Nancy Franklin summarized the reasons of time, travel, and cost that led commissioners to alternate full CRJC meetings and SC meetings, and that the solution is not more meetings, but in the process around the SC meetings. As decisions have to be made and counsel sought by staff between full meetings, she suggested that steering committee meeting minutes be formally approved, and that all commissioners be notified of the meetings, so any can attend (though only officers vote). Cheston Newbold said that he still supports monthly CRJC meetings although he recognizes the time issue for others. He is concerned that the SC is being asked to do more because of the infrequent full meetings.

Norm suggested that the role of the SC be formalized, and that financials be available for all commissioners. Gary sent an inquiry to the Vermont secretary of state about the legality of the recent special steering committee meeting. Bernie Folta commented that CRJC's constituents are public agencies, and even though CRJC is a private nonprofit we may be covered by the NH 91-A, the Right to Know law. Sharon said that 91-A applies and that CRJC went through formal rule making procedures under NH law. Having the SC meetings informal was a deliberate choice of commissioners. Bev Major said she inquired of the VT secretary of state, before Gary submitted his request, and was told that there is no problem with notice, as CRJC is a NH corporation. She thinks problems come up because of the frequency of meetings, and that commissioners can receive agendas of SC meetings.

Hank Swan said this should not be an issue. There has always been an open invitation to all commissioners to attend SC, and the opportunity is there for anyone to speak and influence proceedings, though only officers vote. He suggested the reason for the SC is evidenced at today's meeting – there is not adequate attendance at the commission meetings. There are many issues on which staff seeks advice, and the SC provides this. The meetings for SC and CRJC are all on the same calendar that commissioners receive. He believes that so much interpretation is needed for the financial statements that often it is better to hear from the CPA at a meeting. John Tucker agreed with Hank, noting that for nearly 20 years, decisions have been reached by consensus. He would hate the commissions to be strangled by bureaucracy. He supports minutes of the SC if that is a legal requirement, and giving financials to full commissions quarterly or more often if needed. Mary Sloat reminded everyone that the change to alternate month meetings was experimental, and if something comes up and an extra meeting is needed, one should be called. Michaela Stickney said she had similar concerns with notice issues at the Lake Champlain Citizens Advisory Committee, and the AG's office advised that gubernatorial and legislatively appointed committees are exempt. Required are notes available within five days that reveal who met, where, and what motions were made.

John Tucker motion: that the SC bring before the commissions in November recommended changes, if necessary and desirable, to the bylaws regarding the conduct of SC meetings. Cheston second. Nancy said that the bylaws are fine as written, and a change would be to notice all commissioners of the meeting agenda. Norm questioned whether the SC has authority to make decisions like it did in September, hiring a new person and committing funds. To give the SC the authority to do it would be a change. Sharon said that under 91-A there is a provision for emergency meetings, and she considered the September SC meeting an emergency, and also that the by-laws provide for special meetings of the SC. The motion passed unanimously. Robert Harcke asked if there was a quorum (a minimum of five members of each commission present and voting), and the chair ruled that there was.

**2. Federal Agricultural programs.** Sharon explained that NH NRCS chair George Cleek could not make the meeting, and Deb Weymouth, the NRCS district conservationist for Sullivan and Cheshire counties is here in his place. Bob Paquin is now the head of the Vt. Farm Services Agency. Paquin gave an overview of the agency's work, the great increase in demand for loans, the plight of dairy farmers in particular, and internal challenges facing the agency. Farm payments are tied up in a colossal and outdated computer system. The stimulus package had funds to upgrade this – but that provision was defeated. He seeks to fix the computer system, address human resource issues around federalizing the employees, and assist NRCS in administration of the conservation programs.

Deb Weymouth explained that the mission of NRCS is to provide leadership and partnership effort to maintain, conserve, and sustain natural resources through working with private landowners

with training and technical assistance, and some funding. She gave an overview of the service's many programs aimed at agricultural and forestland owners.

John Tucker raised the concern about the survivability of dairy in valley. Bob Paquin said that in VT the number of farms is growing, with about 7,000, up from 5,000 10 years ago, and there is a diversity of new entrants. He is struck by the number of young people and especially women. 1,000

farms ship milk. Through its loan program, FSA is trying to help the viable operations weather this economy, but there is concern that even well managed farms are highly leveraged, and there could be a snowball effect of confidence loss by farmers and lenders if some of these fail. He noted that other sectors of farming are hurting too, so addressing just dairy concerns in the Farm Bill is politically tough. A basic problem is the oversupply of milk. Supply management is needed nationally, but there have never been regional conceptual agreements on how this would look. His mission is to try to use the farm programs to help farmers maintain income, but not simply heap on more debt, and not help ones that should transition out of the business. He noted that the net per hundredweight is now minus \$2.30 (the lowest ever before was 30 cents net profit).

Norm Wright inquired of potential alternatives to dairy, and Bob Paquin noted programs for biomass crop assistance, and growing interest in growing grains and seeds such as sunflower, driven both by energy and localvore interests.

**3. Presentation to Bob Paquin** – Bob was presented with the George W. Moulton Founders Award. He was commended for his many years of dedication and support of CRJC while working for Sen. Leahy.

#### **4. Staff Reports.**

**Ammonoosuc River** – Adair reported on the geomorphic assessment of the Ammonoosuc River that is being funded by NH DES and the MEF. Working with us are the Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust and John Field. The technical advisory committee met last week, and a public forum was held in Littleton where over 60 people attended. CRJC, Field, and the Ammo. River LAC will meet with boards in the seven riverfront towns over the next month to present the findings and fluvial erosion hazard maps. The next stage will focus on a high visibility area in Lisbon where artificial straightening has led to severe erosion of a school soccer field. A concept paper is being prepared seeking further funding for detailed engineering, hydraulic modeling, and conservation opportunities in the floodplain.

**Colebrook Riverbank Restoration** – Sharon said that we are about to contract for Mohawk River restoration to restore the alluvial fan and disperse the river's entry to the Ct. River. An MOU between Colebrook and CRJC is drafted to facilitate cooperation on the Business Park riverbank work.. EDA has informally approved the project but it is not yet final. Sharon said she is pleased with the work of the public works director in Colebrook. Construction may be done this year but some may be in spring. The governors' tour Oct. 7 will stop at the site. Ray Burton issued the invitations to the governors' tour, and if any commissioner wants to go please let Sharon know.

**LRS Water Resources plan publication** – Rebecca distributed proofs for LRS 2 and 3, and LRS 1 is being printed. All the plans should be produced and distributed within six weeks. We are able

to print these in full color for less than the original bid for black and white. All the plans will be posted on our Web site.

**Atlas sales and presentations** – Rebecca reported that we are widening distribution of free copies to more watershed schools, and if commissioners have particular private schools they would like to receive copies, please let Sharon know. The Compass School and White Mountain School were suggested. Commissioners may purchase a hard copy for \$65, or for \$75 have a copy mailed. Please let Sharon know by Dec. 10. John Tucker motioned that the commissions commend the staff on the publication of the Atlas and the water resources plans. Mary Sloat second. Unanimous.

**Water Resources meetings** – Adair is presenting these, with many attending in Littleton, good attendance in Lebanon, and none in Canaan, where the economy is grim. Three presentations will be held in each subcommittee region. A first round was held in the spring. She asks that commissioners attend the presentations close to them. She will send the dates. She is doing a variety of communications efforts to get attendance up, including posters, press releases, reminders, co-sponsorship by local boards, and providing local subcommittee members with an invitation they can use to invite key local officials and landowners.

**Byway Council** – Rebecca reported that we have contracted with a Web site design consultant who will make a presentation at the Nov. 12 harvest supper. Sharon reported that the low bid for signs came in significantly under budget, and she expressed hope that the signs will be installed this year. Adair reported that the revised waypoint panels are nearly complete.

**Water Quality Monitoring** – Adair reviewed the Tri-State Targeted Water Quality Initiative, which is analyzing recreational impacts from CSOs. Volunteers have tested water this summer at sites from Wilder to Cornish. Despite the heavy rains earlier in the summer there has been only one bacteria violation (last year there were two) out of the 170+ samples taken this year. Severe bacteria violations have been found regularly in Massachusetts. Results may be seen at [www.cesd.umass.edu/twi](http://www.cesd.umass.edu/twi).

**Financial Report** – Sharon reviewed the Aug. 31 financial statement. We have 21 income sources, but funds are slow in being received, due to late invoices as a result of Barbara's death, and completion of tasks needed before billing. Larry Reed has completed the FY '09 audit. Officers determined that his presentation should be done given to CRJC in November.

**5. Other Business.** Mary Sloat reported that Ken Hastings of the Headwaters LRS has been appointed to the Connecticut Lakes Headwaters Committee chaired by Bing Judd. Nancy Franklin reported that the personnel committee is reviewing policies. Hank Swan questioned whether the full board is supposed to vote on personnel issues or the SC. He noted that typically these decisions are made by executive or personnel committees and not aired to the full board.

Adjourned at 3:10 p.m.