

**STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES (Draft)**  
**February 22, 2010**

PRESENT: Bev Major, Nancy Franklin, Cheston Newbold, Cleve Kapala, Nat Tripp, Gayle Ottmann, Peter Gregory, George Watkins, John Lawe, Bill Roberts, Sharon Francis, Adair Mulligan

1. Minutes of January 11- approved on a motion by George, seconded by Nancy.
2. Financial Reports for January 31- Reviewed statements of Cash Receipts and Disbursements; Changes in Net Assets on both Cash and Accrual Basis; Statement of Financial Position; Accounts Receivable; Accounts Payable. Sharon noted that we are now producing a more extensive array of reports including accrual statements which allow anticipated revenue to be shown even if not invoiced. She asked which reports, when, and how often the Finance Committee, Steering Committee, and full Commissions would like to see. She added that we are now caught up with most accounts payable. Larry is creating a template so that we can do cash flow projections under various scenarios. Cleve and Peter spoke to the benefit of having cash flow reports. Peter asked how much we have borrowed from NHCF grant advances, beyond expenditures related to those projects. The Finance Committee can now do the first review of future statements.
  - a. The major outstanding receivable is the October invoice to NHDOT, which DOT has not paid because there was no pre-approved indirect cost rate. Sharon has submitted a revised invoice for \$29,487 for work completed by September 30. An additional \$11,600 of associated indirect costs remains in dispute, and Sharon has asked Assistant Commissioner Brillhart if he can get an exemption from FHWA because his agency did not inform us of the need to get a pre-approved cost rate. Will be able to bill NHDOT for the October-January period as soon as the previous bill is approved, then will invoice monthly.
  - b. Cleve asked about Larry's letter regarding the choice to omit a statement of cash flow. Sharon said that adding this information would cost \$200/month. Peter suggested getting a quarterly statement of cash flows so trends of borrowing from restricted funds, such as advancements from NHCF, can be tracked more easily.
3. Finance Committee - Bev proposed George as chair, in his position as treasurer, and reported that Hank Swan, Tom Kennedy, and Stephen Long are willing to serve. Slate approved on motion by Peter seconded by Nancy. Will recommend to CRJC for approval in March. Agreed the committee should meet sooner to evaluate financial reporting needs. Sharon said that over the next few months the committee will need to review cash flow projections, budget for coming year, and advertise for the audit. A meeting with Larry Reed may be appropriate.
4. Indirect Cost Rate - Larry has now calculated this rate using two approved methods, and Sharon has sought approval for both from Vtrans. The Vtrans auditor has asked for CRJC's FY2009 audit. Will seek FHWA approval of rate through Vtrans.
5. Communications Director role - Sharon reported that Rebecca's departure means that she and Adair will share responsibility for the byway projects previously delegated to Rebecca. She has asked Rebecca to stay on as an employee, however, expressly to manage the website contract, as she has been involved with this project from the outset. Rebecca is willing to do so. Nat has recently talked with Dean Eastman, NHDOT Byway program officer, and reported that NHDOT has still not approved moving forward with the website project. Even though CRJC issued RFPs and RFQs twice in succession for the website work to address DOT concerns, Dean is now talking about starting over and requiring that we engage a consultant rather than proceed with the selected web contractor. Nat said that all the delays with the website approval are costing CRJC more than the funds available. Gayle and Nat agreed that the current website is functioning adequately, and that it might be preferable to apply for new funding through Vtrans if NHDOT is unwilling to approve our contractor selection. Nat also noted that estimated website maintenance into the future should take about one hour/week.
  - a. The first E-newsletter for the Byway has been completed, using Constant Contact, at cost of \$10.50/month subscription and several days of staff time to learn the program and prepare issue. Adair estimated that future issues will take less than a day. Previous printed newsletters had required a week of time and cost \$2500 each. Can send out an unlimited number of issues to multiple lists; will consider frequency carefully. Future issues could be thematic in nature.
6. Byway funding and proposals to be developed for the Byway Council - Nat said letters of intent have been submitted to both states for the next round of byway funding and applications are to be submitted shortly. The Byway Council's marketing committee would like more independence from CRJC, and wishes to have another organization apply for new byway grants. Nat believes that CRJC's original intent in forming the byway was to

eventually set it up on its own. He said that marketing is a different mission. He said that the Byway Council hopes to apply in NH through an RPC for funds to revise the corridor management plan, including a business plan and setting up an independent 501 c organization. Nat added that the workload for CRJC staff is a concern, especially with Rebecca gone, and that it would be good to diversify how byway grants are funded. He thinks RPCs are more experienced at dealing with transportation agencies. If the Council goes on its own, it may come back in the future. The Byway Council will meet tomorrow.

As other funding sources are constrained, CRJC has become dependent on the byway for income. Losing that income source 1-2 years ahead could be extremely damaging to CRJC. Sharon observed that the authorizing legislation for the Connecticut River commissions mentions tourism. CRJC has developed staff capacity in byway work that is an asset. Cheston said that Nat's suggestion seems precipitous but may be a good idea eventually. Peter said that tension has been growing, and he is not sure how competitive proposals from CRJC would be now because of history with NHDOT and diminished staff capacity. John suggested continuing together as two parallel organizations. Nat said the Byway Council wants more control over how proposals are written and grants administered, rather than having CRJC as a sponsor. Cleve said he doesn't think this would be fatal to CRJC and that change benefits organizations and spurs them to evolve. Gayle said she saw no reason why the two organizations cannot function in parallel and that separation would clarify their missions. Other byways are moving to self-sustainability and she anticipates river towns will contribute funding after value is proved in "putting heads in beds." Nancy said a gradual organized phase-out would be wiser and that without a well-thought-out plan it will not succeed. CRJC staff will complete the current byway grants. Sharon suggested that CRJC be part of a study process to look at sustainability and how to transition the Byway to independent status. She said separation does not bother her as long as it is done responsibly. Nat said that the Byway Council would look at CRJC as one of a number of contractors to administer grants.

7. Sharon's Future with CRJC - Sharon said there is never a good time for this kind of announcement, but she wants Commissioners to know that after 20 years at the helm of CRJC, she would like to phase back over the next two years. She would like to work with the Finance Committee to plan the transition to new leadership. She noted that Steve Long is a member of the Finance Committee and his role at Northern Woodlands has recently taken a similar path. Thus she believes the Finance Committee has a good balance of commissioners to advise the organization, and her, about leadership transition. Bev said Sharon has been a tremendous asset to CRJC, and that she is owed much appreciation, a sentiment echoed around the table. Peter said the Steering Committee should be involved, too. Sharon said that Adair's responsibilities will expand. Bill said that Sharon is a hard worker, and recalled her success in getting the Ashuelot, Contoocook, and Connecticut Rivers designated into the NH Rivers Program.
8. VT Commission - Sharon recounted a recent call from a Valley News reporter who said that the Vermont Connecticut River Watershed Advisory commission was on the Governor's list of boards and commissions to abolish. The reporter also called David Deen who quickly made sure that ANR realized this would be a mistake. Michaela Stickney spoke with the governor who affirmed his intention of supporting CRJC. The Vermont Commission's name was deleted from the list. Sharon expressed regret that such a mistake could even occur, and noted the excellent understanding and communication CRJC has with NHDES and the Governor's Office in NH.
9. Vermont Yankee - Staff recently circulated a draft statement circulated among commissioners which only received one vote of support for publication. Jim Matteau's thoughtful advice based on long experience in the issues surrounding Vermont Yankee was persuasive in guiding CRJC to stay out of the current debate. Bill said that the plant has put heavy stress on people living in the area. Adair said she is receiving queries from subcommittee members and the public about CRJC's position, and said she fears a backlash among CRJC's constituents if the advisory commissions remain silent. Agreed to place a statement on CRJC's website that offers factual information that only CRJC could provide and stays away from opinion and advice.
10. Graduate school intern - Adair suggested seeking the assistance of a graduate school-level intern this summer, a low-cost way to gain new expertise, such as evaluating potential funding sources. Schools with strong natural resource programs such as U. Michigan and Yale offer scholarships to students who pursue intern positions. Peter said TRORC has good luck with interns from Antioch and that Vital Communities works with Tuck students. Adair and Sharon will talk about potential roles.

11. Commissioner nominations: Robert Ritchie has resigned after moving to Vermont. Discussed potential replacements for the New Hampshire slot representing agriculture.
12. March 29 CRJC meeting - several suggestions for program were made.
13. Other business - CRJC has received a request for a speaker in Hartland this summer. Bob Christie has volunteered to be the first commissioner to participate in a speaker's bureau about the river, using equipment and a program provided by staff. No volunteers spoke up; will announce at March meeting.