

Wantastiquet Subcommittee  
of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions  
Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
Brattleboro Savings and Loan, Brattleboro, VT  
Minutes

**Attendees**

Walpole			Westminster	Paul Harlow	
Walpole			Westminster	Jim Calchera	X
Westmoreland	Perry Sawyer		Putney	Joe Grutta	
Westmoreland			Putney		
Chesterfield	Roland Volbehrr	X	Dummerston	Daniel Marx	
Chesterfield			Dummerston		
Hinsdale	Joe Conroy		Brattleboro	Kathy Urffer	X
Hinsdale			Brattleboro	Michael Fairchild	
Vernon	Andy White				
Vernon					

Michael Donovan (Interested Rep, Brattleboro)  
 Tammy K. (Interested Rep, Putney)  
 Robert Harcke (SWRPC)  
 Jim McClammer (CRJC Chair)  
 Olivia Uyizeye (Staff, UVLSRPC)

**Project Parking Lot**

Brattleboro-Hinsdale Bridge Replacement	FERC Relicensing for GRH Dams	Out of Use Brattleboro-Hinsdale Railway Bridge

**Minutes**

1. Olivia opened the meeting at 5:33 PM with no quorum. Introductions were made.
2. Chair Election.  
 Conversation is opened up to any updates on determining a chair. Tammy expresses interest after familiarizing herself with the subcommittee further.
3. Permit Reviews.  
 Olivia noted that there are no permits for the subcommittee to review at this time.
4. Discussion on Brattleboro-Hinsdale Bridges.  
 Uyizeye opens discussion on the topic, sharing presentation slides from the Aug 1 presentation by JB Mack and Erica Roper.

McClammer asks about ice jams and whether there is concern about flooding.

It is noted that ice is causing an issue in relation to bank erosion.

Urffer gives an update on boat launches on the Hinsdale side. Route 119 boat ramp access is expected to close. The boat ramp access near Prospect St in Hinsdale will be modified to allow direct access to the CT River.

Upgrades are also being made on the Broad Brook boat access on the VT side.

Urffer and Volbehr note that CT Paddlers rest on the island as part of the Paddler's trail.

Uyizeye refers to prior discussion had in relation to cultural heritage in this section of the river, specifically petroglyphs.

Volbehr notes that there are petroglyphs, but they are underwater. Volbehr also notes Fort Hill where Abenaki refugee from the King Philip's War briefly settled during the late 1690's. Previously Native American groups would visit the area during the summer months to hunt and fish from the areas near the Canada border.

Tammy discusses a pedestrian bridge being discussed that would cross the Whetstone, connecting to the museum. If this happens, it is possible a boat launch will be included.

Urffer discusses a railroad bridge that is not in use. West River Trail folks and Smokey (new SWRPC rep to CRJC) are interested in re-establishing the bridge to connect trail systems on the NH and VT sides. There are NH state owned parcels in this area that could be used as parks and campgrounds.

McClammer asks who owns the bridge. Volbehr thinks it is likely the state.

There is general agreement that a bridge to connect NH and VT trails would be an initiative for the LRS to support. McClammer notes that a clearer project and feasibility analysis would be needed before taking further action. The project would further require connecting and accessing multiple parcels with various owners, engineering and design work, and liability concerns. The VT side might be more difficult to work with than NH due to topography and land ownership.

Harcke notes the expected positive economic impact for Hinsdale.

The idea is mentioned to have GRH put some money into this type of project as part of their relicensing deal.

Calchera notes that the railroad bridge was discussed as part of the scenario for the large, multimodal bridge construction (including pedestrian access with bump outs and signage).

For the May meeting: Uyizeye will follow up with JB and Erica on the current state of the large bridge project. Urffer will continue discussions with stakeholders.

##### 5. Discussion on FERC Dam Relicensing Process.

Uyizeye opens conversation on the FERC process and shares the summary written by McClammer in September 2018. Urffer and McClammer provide an overview of the process

and their experience thus far. McClammer notes that little has changed since the summary was written.

Dams up for the licensing of their operations must go through the FERC process. Contracts typically work to give the company use of a public resource for a specific time frame, usually 30-50 years. The last license for the dams in the Lower CT of NH/VT was in 1979.

The relicensing process allows for the study of operation and impacts, such as on ecosystems, recreation and economy. The owner must then indicate how they will minimize impact, followed by public input and relicense.

33 studies have been done. At the moment, the process is in slow motion as the final two studies on Instream flow and endangered mussels are performed.

CRJC and CRC are looking more at the big picture, working with various stakeholders.

The mitigation fund in place for the 15 mile dam, owned by TransCanada, is discussed as an impactful and appropriate response. However, GRH has not showed interest in this approach.

McClammer notes that increased public input is needed to place more pressure on implementation of a mitigation fund. Both VTDEC and NHDES will need to give a 401 certificate, which will automatically become a part of the license in how it relates to water quality.

Donovan notes that utilities have a lot of power due to the public interest in maintaining electricity. The strongest lever points in the process are endangered species and cultural heritage.

Donovan asks how other states have handled similar problems. Urffer and McClammer note that they have not looked into this much and that this is in part due to the unique history and geology of the region. The Penobscot River in Maine is noted as a possible example. On this river, dams are being taken down.

## 6. Other Business.

Uyizeye invites discussion on additional topics.

McClammer notes that the results from the CRJC survey will be shared soon. The survey was done by Lionel Chute on priorities for water quality efforts by the organization.

Urffer expresses concern about keeping members and increasing momentum. Urffer notes that the LRS could meet more regularly, some subcommittees meet every other month. Also, the LRS could take on a review of the water resources or recreation Wantastiquet management chapters. Urffer mentions that VT permits are made public and the LRS could take greater initiative to comment on ones deemed appropriate.

Uyizeye will include these items on the next meeting's agenda.

## 7. Upcoming Events.

CRC is hosting a Connecticut River Watershed Summit Celebration for Southern VT and NH on Feb 26, 430-7pm at ClubVT (55 Putney Landing Road, Putney, VT). The event is meant to connect disparate groups working on the river and its tributaries.

The 2019 NH Water and Watershed Conference will be held on March 15 at Plymouth State University.

8. Next meeting.

Members agreed to continue using the Doodle poll strategy for scheduling meetings. The next meeting will be in early May.

9. Meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Olivia Uyizeye.