



Connecticut River Joint Commissions

Tuesday, March 18, 2021

Virtual Meeting

Executive Committee – 10:00 – 11:00 PM

Minutes

Virtual meeting requirement review:

The President of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions has found that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID – 19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor’s Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020–04, the CRJC and its Committees are authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting which was authorized pursuant to the Governor’s Emergency Order.

The CRJC is utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting. All members of the Commissions have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting as follows:

Upper Valley Lake Sunapee RPC is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: CRJC Executive Committee

CRJC / Upper Valley Lake Sunapee RPC is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: CRJC Executive Committee

Time: Mar 8, 2021 12:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Executive Committee Minutes

10:00 – 11:00 PM

Present:

VT – Campany, Lembke, Caduto, Rasmussen.

NH – Griffin, Hastings,

Staff: Crocker

10:00 – Convene

Comm. Campany convened the meeting.

Review Federal Earmark Proposal

Commissioners reviewed and discussed the attached proposal. Comm. Lembke moved to forward the proposal to Senator Leahy’s staff. Comm. Caduto seconded the motion. Vote: Unanimous

Other Business –

Adjourn: Comm. Rasmussen moved to adjourn. Comm. Hastings seconded the motion at 11:00 AM.

Minutes adopted: April 19, 2021

Link to Google Drive Audio File:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RGHNgCpjOboUpnUGNZDJgeGvHYQ9Ajrj/view?usp=sharing>

The Connecticut River Joint Commissions Appropriations Request

\$1,000,000 per year to support operations of the bi-state Connecticut River Joint Commissions (CRJC) and its Local River Subcommittees, including an Executive Director, Assistant, and Project Manager, in order to execute projects identified in the 2020-2025 CRJC Strategic Plan, water quality and habitat conservation and restoration projects on the main stem of the Connecticut River, and enable more robust collaborative bi-state engagement in federal matters related to the upper Connecticut River Valley, including the Long Island Sound TMDL, Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge, the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission, the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission, and the Connecticut River Valley Flood Control Commission.

The New Hampshire legislature created the Connecticut River Valley Resource Commission in 1987 to preserve and protect the resources of the valley, to guide growth and development within it, and to initiate cooperation with Vermont for the benefit of the valley. The Vermont legislature established the Connecticut River Watershed Advisory Commission in the following year. The two commissions banded together as the Connecticut River Joint Commissions in 1989, and also achieved the status of a non-profit organization. The purpose of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions is to facilitate the implementation of the purposes of both Commissions as set forth in the specific legislation establishing them; and to continually work towards improvement and maintenance to the highest attainable level the water quality and diversity of the indigenous life in the waters, riverbanks, and land within the Connecticut River watershed.

It is structured as the Connecticut River Joint Commissions, Inc., a nonprofit corporation established in August 1990 in accord with Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, as amended, and NH RSA Chapter 292, as amended.

S. 301 was introduced in the 109th Congress, 1st Session, “To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide assistance in implementing cultural heritage, conservation, and recreational activities in the Connecticut River watershed of the States of New Hampshire and Vermont.”
(<https://www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/senate-bill/301>)

Local River Subcommittees

To ensure local leadership in implementing the New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Act on the Connecticut River, the CRJC established five local river subcommittees, with the specific approval of the New Hampshire legislature. The Vermont legislature also directed its 27 riverfront communities to participate in the work of these subcommittees. The CRJC asked the selectmen of all riverfront towns for nominations, and appointed up to two members and several alternates from each of the 53 towns

Resource Documents

About the CRJC: <https://www.crjc.org/about-crjc/>

CRJC Bylaws: <https://www.crjc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CRJC-Bylaws-Amended-10152018.pdf>

Vermont Enabling Statute: <https://www.crjc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/CRJC-VT-Enabling-Legislation.pdf>

New Hampshire Enabling Statute: <https://www.crjc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/CRJC-NH-Enabling-Legislation.pdf>

2020-2025 CRJC Strategic Plan: https://www.crjc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CRJC_StrategicPlan_FINAL.pdf

Request & Justification

\$1,000,000 per year to support operations of the bi-state Connecticut River Joint Commissions (CRJC) and its Local River Subcommittees, including an Executive Director, Assistant, and Project Manager, in order to execute projects identified in the 2020-2025 CRJC Strategic Plan, water quality and habitat conservation and restoration projects on the main stem of the Connecticut River, and enable more robust collaborative bi-state engagement in federal matters related to the upper Connecticut River Valley, including the Long Island Sound TMDL, Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge, the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission, the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission, and the Connecticut River Valley Flood Control Commission.

The Connecticut River Joint Commission's (CRJC) Strategic Plan 2020-2025 builds on over 30 years of experience in engaging communities in the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont and New Hampshire in a "shared commitment to safeguard a good place and a good life." (Connecticut River Corridor Management Plan, 1997)

The CRJC was originally the recipient of federal funding via earmarks, and had a budget of \$300,000 to \$500,000 per year. Beginning around 2010 it was left to the states of Vermont and New Hampshire to fund the CRJC through performance-based grants totaling \$60,000 to \$65,000 per year in total. The transition from being a well-funded organization with its own staff to pursue its statutory intent to a model that requires the contracting out for basic operating services has been a challenge. Because the State of Vermont is no longer inclined to fund the CRJC as a stand-alone organization, total funding for the foreseeable future will be solely from New Hampshire at a rate of around \$30,000 per year. This level of funding will not sustain CRJC operations. Vermont has suggested the CRJC apply for grants to implement clean water projects, but those grants fund project management only and cannot support CRJC operations. Loss of basic operational capacity means the CRJC cannot access state funding for project implementation.

We are seeking restoration of federal funding of this bi-state commission to support its operations, which include bi-state local and state-level engagement, and project development and implementation. This operational support will enable bi-state collaboration to access state programs to leverage meaningful investments in water quality, conservation, and preservation in the upper Connecticut River Valley in collaboration with local, regional, and state stakeholders. It will also enable the upper Connecticut River Valley to have more robust collaborative bi-state engagement in federal matters such as the Long Island Sound TMDL, Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge, the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission, and the Connecticut River Valley Flood Control Commission.

Executing the New Strategic Plan

During the past year the CRJC developed and adopted its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan which builds upon its original statutory purposes and its unique structure and strengths within the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont and New Hampshire. The CRJC is a quasi-governmental organization composed of Governor-appointed and designated Commissioners from Vermont and New Hampshire, and the parent

organization to five Local River Subcommittees. They may represent different interests, but are united in a shared regard of the Connecticut River, the surrounding landscape, and the ecosystem as a whole. Together, they identify and pursue collaborative efforts that safeguard the Valley.

We anticipate the Connecticut River Valley will see substantial growth related to migration from metropolitan areas to our east and south driven by climate change and sea level rise, as well as the current pandemic. The need for facilitated cooperation and coordination between the two states on development within the watershed will only increase.

The actions proposed in this plan leverage the group's strongest assets: the passion and commitment of the volunteer members and Commissioners, and its statutorily-enabled purpose and connection to state government. In the short term, these strategic leverage points will build internal capacity to help sustain the organization. Over time and amidst those global challenges, the CRJC intends to continue serving communities of the Valley by helping to guide growth and development in a way that conserves landscape integrity and stewards the use of its natural resources.

The CRJC is well-situated to play a convening and advocating role, and understands that this work is most effective in partnership with existing organizations and initiatives. The CRJC values connection, advocacy, and mutual support, and is therefore dedicated to elevating collective efforts and collaborating with like-minded partners.

The focus of the strategic plan is on the following functions and goals:

- **Advocate:** Be a voice for the Connecticut River Valley within the two states and beyond by initiating and bolstering efforts to safeguard its protection and conservation by identifying relevant policy initiatives and issues, supporting a common effort among diverse stakeholders and partners, and supporting communication to state government.
- **Convene:** Gather partners to facilitate knowledge and resource sharing that supports the health of the Valley by establishing the CRJC as a network convener and developing a plan for annual gatherings around core policy issues.
- **Connect:** Bridge the divide between local communities and state entities for mutual benefit and project completion by bolstering local action and leadership and connecting local knowledge to broader initiatives.
- **Sustain:** Build and maintain an enduring institution that delivers on its mission by creating a robust system of volunteer recruitment, maintaining relationships with existing and prospective funders, and creating internal systems for feedback and learning.

Questions?

Chris Campany, Chair, Vermont Connecticut River Watershed Advisory Commission & Vice-Chair
Connecticut River Joint Commissions

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