

**Wantastiquet Subcommittee
of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions**

Tuesday, May 24, 2021

Video Conference Call

Meeting Minutes

Attendees

Walpole	Samantha Loch	✓	Westminster	Paul Harlow	
Walpole			Westminster	Jim Calchera	
Westmoreland	Perry Sawyer	✓	Putney		
Westmoreland			Putney		
Chesterfield	Roland Volbehrr		Dummerston	Daniel Marx	
Chesterfield			Dummerston		
Hinsdale	Mike Darcy	✓	Brattleboro	Kathy Urffer	✓
Hinsdale			Brattleboro	Michael Fairchild	✓
Vernon	Andy White				
Vernon					

Paul Reys (Walpole, NH); Suzanne Baxtresser (Brattleboro, VT); Olivia Uyizeye (Staff)

Minutes

1. Welcome & Introductions

Chair Sawyer called the meeting, conducted via conference call, to order at 6:07 PM under the emergency provisions of RSA 91-A, New Hampshire's Right-to-Know law, as allowed by Emergency Order 11 under Executive Order 2020-04 in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. Sawyer conducted a roll call of LAC members, invited any guests to introduce themselves, and welcomed all present.

2. Meeting minutes from March

Sawyer opens up the March minutes for review. Darcy makes a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Urffer seconds the motion. The vote passes unanimous by roll call vote.

3. Permit Reviews

a. Farr Rd, Chesterfield

Sawyer explains that this permit does have some significant impacts within the shoreland protection area. Discussion follows:

- Urffer comments that it is unclear why they would be allowed to construct new building within the buffer area and whether the roads on the map are in fact fully existing or may be dirt paths.
- Fairchild comments that there is a steep bank from the house site down to the Connecticut River. There is no sign from the river of cutting or work being done in that area. Also the northerly bald eagle nest noted in the application on the VT side is no longer present.
- Urffer notes the description of the history of the parcel on page 12 of the application.
- Darcy comments that the entire project is within the shoreland protection area. It is unclear why it is being done inside this zone. Urffer agrees. Sawyer asks if this would set a precedent for other applications if allowed.
- Fairchild comments that the site does seem to be on the far side of the buffer area and on a higher plateau area, thus the impact to the river is likely to be minimal.

- Sawyer comments that the septic system is sited out of the buffer shoreland protection area.
- Fairchild comments that there are steep, noticeable paths from the existing houses up on the plateau down to the River. This permit does not appear to be requesting this.
- Urffer notes that this is 500 square feet of additional impervious surface, which will have impacts. Also, it is unclear if this is really allowed within the buffer area.
- Sawyer notes concerns related to drainage from the site.
- Loch asks how far the septic system is from the 250 foot line.
- Uyizeye briefly explains the different zones of the shoreland protection area as described and shown here - <https://www.des.nh.gov/protected-shoreland-faq#faq30886>

Darcy makes a motion to accept the project as proposed. Fairchild seconds the motion. The motion passes unanimous by roll call vote.

b. Soundview VT Holdings, Putney, Renewal NPDES Minor Discharge (3-1128, comments due 6/14/2021)

Urffer explains that this is the Putney Paper Company in VT that discharges directly into the Connecticut River. Urffer explains that she hears complaints about this site, sometimes referring to a smell of sulfur. The NPDES system is renewed every 5 years. The comment period is likely to be shifted back a month to July and there will be a public meeting on the topic, in July as well.

Fairchild comments that he has seen the pipe that enters out into the Connecticut River. About 8-10 years ago, he had alerted them to a broken pipe that was fixed promptly.

Urffer notes that she has no reason to think they are not acting in compliance. However the question remains what might they be able to do in this next permit to improve conditions? Urffer is planning to host a webinar on the topic and will keep folks informed on what she is aware of.

c. Great River Hydro FERC Application Updates

Uyizeye comments that there are no major updates on the GRH FERC application as it relates to LRS comment at this time.

Urffer adds that there have been communications back and forth between GRH and FERC where GRH has provided additional information on each dam. This gives reference to a possible shuttle service around a portage area, although there is no narrative that goes along with this.

Urffer adds that the Connecticut River Conservancy continues to hold hydropower coffee hours once a month to discuss the relicensing on specific topics. Another is coming up on June 8 related to fish passage, and the next on July 14 focused on understanding the economics and markets that drive the business. CRC will be drafting a summary of the relicensing, commenting, and an example letter.

4. Other Permit Communications

a. Hinsdale Brattleboro Bridge Signage Input request from NHDOT

Uyizeye explains that Tracie Sales with NHDES recommended that we comment on the following request from NHDOT in regards to its work to build a new bridge over the Connecticut River between Hinsdale NH and Brattleboro VT – “two existing NH Protected Rivers signs located within the project limits that will need to be relocated once the construction is complete. We are trying to clarify what NHDES would like to do with the existing signs, options include:

1. Relocate the existing signs to the new bridges.
2. Relocate the two existing signs to new locations adjacent to the existing bridges after construction and install 2 new signs at the new bridge.
3. Or something else.”

Urffer displays an example of this sign from the Merrimack River. Darcy comments that he believes these two signs are now located on the island between Hinsdale and Brattleboro. Sawyer notes that these signs have meaning beyond saying which River it is. Further discussion follows

- Darcy explains that you could move the sign further down 119 on the Hinsdale side, while on the VT side it is unclear where those would be moved to.
- Fairchild comments that right at the entrance to the bridge on a straight line of sight would be most appropriate.
- Urffer suggests having 2 signs along the new pedestrian crossway and two sign on the new bridges.
- Darcy cannot remember if there is a sign at the Hinsdale boat launch where you would also want a sign. For simplicity sake at this time, Darcy recommends simply moving the signs to the new bridge.
- Urffer is concerned that if we don't advocate for new signs now, we won't get them later.

Urffer makes a motion request that the two signs be kept at their existing location and then add two new signs on the new bridge. Darcy seconds the motion. The motion passes unanimous by roll call vote.

- b. Revised Environmental Review for Drinking Water Infrastructure Project in North Walpole (LRS reviewed in 2019 with no concerns, Past comment for revised application 5/4/21)

Uyizeye reports that after inquiring whether the LRS might still comment on this permit, Tracie Sales with NHDES responded noting that this review relates to project funding and is unclear where it currently is in the process. If the proposed work requires state permits, the LRS will have the opportunity to comment then, even if it is too late at present on the funding side.

Sam comments that the wells are located in an industrial area and is currently working to understand the project. It relates to levels on 1,4-Dioxane and treatment for it in drinking works. Loch comments that this application focuses on one pollutant, however there are many others on the site. Loch notes that it does cause cancer, and she's happy to review and pull together a number of questions on the work to get answered. Loch notes it is unclear what design they will be going with for the 1,4-Dioxane treatment plant. Urffer describes that the funding being requested is likely to partially pay for engineers to determine the appropriate route.

Sawyer explains that the information provided is incomplete. Loch is comfortable keeping an eye on the project and getting more information.

- c. Approved after request for more information submitted on Fortier. Wetlands & Shoreland Permits in Chesterfield (2021-00567 & 2021-00576)

5. Updates & Other Business
 - a. 2020 VRAP Report

Uyizeye notes that all sites were outside of water quality standards for dissolved oxygen at one point in time. Otherwise, parameters measured were within regulatory limits – water temperature, pH, specific conductance, and turbidity.

b. 2021 Water Quality Testing

Uyizeye reports that the LRS is all set to take on water quality testing this season. With volunteer teams of 2-3 people based in both Brattleboro and Walpole, data will be collected at all VRAP sites and two additional sites to be sent off for analysis at the Vermont Agriculture and Environmental Laboratory. Uyizeye thanks those members who are volunteering and have also helped with sending out requests to expand recruitment.

c. Outreach & Speaker Series

The second event of the series is coming up, details below.

Future of Invasive Species Management

Tuesday, May 26, 6-730PM

Register at www.surveymonkey.com/r/GRPW8QT

d. Change to Emergency Order allowing NH public meetings to have quorums meet virtually

Uyizeye reports that the NH emergency order that allows a quorum for public meetings to occur virtually is expected to not be continued starting in June 1. Thus the LRS will need to transition to in-person or hybrid meetings (as long as a quorum is present in person). Members suggest locations at the Riverside Hotel (patio out back with Wi-Fi) and the picnic tables on the bridge between Hinsdale and Brattleboro (possibly no Wi-Fi). Uyizeye notes that if the meeting is all in person, she will be asking a member to take minutes as budget may not provide for staff attendance.

6. Adjourn

Darcy makes a motion to adjourn. Urffer seconds the motion. The vote passes unanimous by roll call vote.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Olivia Uyizeye