



CRJC Mount Ascutney Local River Subcommittee

Monday, October 2, 2023

7 PM

Attendees

Plainfield	David Taylor	P	Windsor	Michael Metivier	X
Plainfield	<i>Open</i>		Windsor	Jim Bennett	P
Cornish	Jeffrey Plant	P	Weathersfield	Howard Beach	P
Cornish	<i>Open</i>		Weathersfield	<i>Open</i>	
Claremont	<i>Open</i>		Springfield	Bill Manner	X
Claremont	<i>Open</i>		Springfield	Kelly Stettner	V
Hartland	Judy Howland	P	Rockingham	<i>Open</i>	
Hartland	Dan Nelson	P	Rockingham	<i>Open</i>	
Charlestown	John Streeter	X			
Charlestown	<i>Open</i>				

P – In-Person; V – Virtual; X – Not Present

In-Person: Majestic Terhune (CRJC Staff Consultant); Chuck Fenton (Route 5 Corridor Presenter) Kate Buckman (CRC; CRJC Full Commission); Kathy Urffer (CRC); Jim McClammer (CRJC Full Commission)

1. Welcome & Introductions

Chair Taylor started the meeting at 7:02 PM. Members and other attendees introduced themselves.

2. Bicycle Corridor Update from Chuck Fenton

Fenton provided an overview of transportation in the Connecticut River Valley, noting that the highway corridor was built with vehicles in mind and advocating for the proposed Route 5 Bicycle Corridor that would increase accessibility and connectivity for bicyclists and pedestrians. Fenton highlighted examples of other pathways and opportunities for future connectivity, including the Mascoma trails in Lebanon and Lamoille trails in St. Johnsbury.

Fenton emphasized increased opportunities for both commuters and recreationists, adding that such a corridor would benefit locals and visitors.

Taylor asked for clarification on who will manage the corridor. Fenton described the current process for the project, explaining that regional planning commissions will be sending out surveys to gauge how communities would prefer to implement the corridor. Impacted municipalities will play a role in planning and implementation.

Fenton called on members to support the project and help create alternatives to personal vehicular transportation. Plant, Fenton, and McClammer discussed the opportunity for bike-ped sharing of trails, touching on concerns regarding e-bikes.

Nelson asked about the anticipated location of the corridor: completely off Route 5 or adjacent to it? Howland, Fenton, Plant, and Stettner commented on varying proximity to the Connecticut River, traffic patterns, and proximity to extant trails along Route 5.

McClammer noted Great River Hydro as a potential contact for the corridor, stating that they have an interest in enhancing recreational activities along the Connecticut River. Urffer recommended that Fenton also connect with Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance. Buckman recommended the Granite Outdoor Alliance and Pathways of Keene as potential supporters.

Beach highlighted right-of-ways as an issue that may arise when creating the corridor.

Terhune said that she anticipates that the Route 5 Bicycle Corridor will continue to be a conversation for the subcommittee and reminded members of the upcoming CRJC Social, wherein a speaker will further address the corridor.

3. Meeting Minutes from August 2022; Notes from May 2023

Taylor opened the August 2022 minutes for review.

Howland motioned to approve the minutes. Bennett seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Update on Final License Application for the Wilder, Bellows Falls, and Vernon Dams from Kathy Urffer (CRC) and Kate Buckman (CRC)

Buckman provided a brief overview of the Connecticut River Conservancy and both her and Urffer's roles with CRC. She explained CRC's connection to the FERC relicensing process.

Urffer reviewed dam and legislative history along the Connecticut River watershed, ultimately describing the current FERC relicensing process and applications from Great River Hydro and FirstLight. Urffer emphasized companies' responsibility to mitigate for impacts and community members' ability to advocate for greater mitigation and recreation efforts from applicants.

Urffer described the studies undertaken to help better understand the impact of and conditions surrounding the dams in question. Nelson asked whether older studies carry through ownerships changes, and Urffer confirmed that they do.

Urffer gave an overview of applicant operational changes and highlighted topics that are not fully addressed within the application. She additionally described the timeline and budget included in the application.

Urffer discussed the next steps for the relicensing process, including 1) FERC's issuing of REA, which triggers the public comment period and 2) the eventual public comment period for the EIS.

Taylor asked when to expect public comment period to open. Urffer replied that there is no set date, although CRC is meeting with various towns and organizations over the next couple months of anticipation of period opening.

Taylor and Beach expressed an interest in recreational opportunities along the Connecticut River. Urffer agreed, stating that public surveys had reflected an increase in additional recreational involvement. Buckman underscored that FERC values information on local impacts from local residents.

Nelson suggested that CRC hold workshops to help municipalities, organizations, and other stakeholders draft their comments ahead of the comment period. Urffer and Buckman noted the suggestion and added that they would be happy to speak further with anyone on drafting comments if they are interested.

McClammer shared his background with CRJC and FERC relicensing and described the importance of a mitigation enhancement fund for relicensing applicants. He elaborated on points mentioned by Urffer and Buckman, addressing the environmental impact of the operations and Great River Hydro's financial capabilities.

Terhune to distribute the presentation to meeting attendees.

5. Permit Reviews

a. Special Permit Application #23-328 —NHDOT Herbicide Use

The committee had no comments on the application.

b. Hazardous Waste Limited Permit Renewal Application NHD069S65236

The committee had no comments on the application.

6. Updates & Other Business

a. Notice of Review of Green Mountain Power Application for Cavendish Dam Relicensing

Terhune described the notice for Green Mountain Power's application for Cavendish Dam relicensing.

b. Legislative Update — House Bill 308; Goes into Effect 10/3/2023

Terhune described meeting policies as of 10/2 and their changes following House Bill 308.

c. CRJC Social Reminder

Terhune reminded attendees of the upcoming CRJC Social on Saturday, 10/7, at Storrs Pond in Hanover, NH. Terhune to send information to attendees.

d. Town/Member Updates

No members had updates.

7. Adjourn

Howland motioned to adjourn. Beach seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:42 PM.

Next Meeting

Monday, January 8, 2024 @ 7 PM

Meeting notes respectfully submitted by Majestic Terhune