

**CRJC Wantastiquet Subcommittee
Minutes**

Thursday, April 18th, 2024, at 6:00PM

Hybrid Meeting: Zoom and Windham Regional Commission Office

Attendees

Walpole	Samantha Loch	X	Westminster		
Walpole			Westminster	Jim Calchera	P
Westmoreland	Perry Sawyer	P	Putney	Heidi Henkel	P
Westmoreland			Putney		
Chesterfield	Roland Volbehr	X	Dummerston		
Chesterfield			Dummerston		
Hinsdale	Mike Darcy	X	Brattleboro	Kathy Urffer	X
Hinsdale			Brattleboro	Michael Fairchild	P
Vernon	Andy White	P			
Vernon					

Note: P = present in person; V = present over remote virtual platform; X = not present

Others Present: Ian Garland (UVLSRPC Staff)

Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Sawyer convened at 6:14 PM. Members said greetings and introduced themselves to Garland.

2. Meeting Minutes from November Approval

Calchera wanted to fix “Phase Four” to “Faith’s Ford.”

With that amendment, Calchera motioned to approve the November Minutes. White seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

3. Permit Updates

a. (Past Comment Period/Informational Agenda Item) Headwater Precision; Hazardous Waste Limited Permit; West Chesterfield, NH (Received 2/22/24)

Calchera didn’t see where anything new would enter the environment. Mentioned that they do electric polishing and have many large tanks in West Chesterfield. White gave a breakdown of the company and mentioned that they made quality reels. Fairchild talked about the previous owners of the property. White talked about how it got passed to the current owner. Sawyer mentioned that

it sounded like there wasn't a lot of need for discussion and that everything was on the "up and up"; mentioned that they wanted to avoid problems by upgrading and renewing their equipment by keeping up with their yearly maintenance. Henkel mentioned that it's better for the environment for them to do this upgrade than to not do it. White mentioned that chemicals would seep into the ground if they didn't upgrade; also mentioned that they might be expanding their waste storage slightly. Henkel responded by saying that they'd have to expand their waste storage. Sawyer said that they are also evaporating some of their waste. White mentioned that they would also have to be transporting out some waste as well. Fairchild also mentioned that they have reverse osmosis technology. Sawyer mentioned that this is purely informational, and they won't have a say; wanted to stay updated on the information.

b. Great River Hydro/FERC Relicensing (Received 2/22/24; Deadline Extended to 5/22/24)

White had a comment about the fish ladders in the comments; 20-year time frame to repurpose the fish ladders; might be an extensive amount of time; has seen them working on them and that was the extent of his knowledge; good with everything else. Also mentioned that eels are getting sucked down streams; has been seeing eels for 30+ years and the number of eels is drastically different from what it once was; only females travel until sexual maturity, then travel back down; talked to many NH Fish and Wildlife biologists that discussed a huge loss in female population. Sawyer said that in Bellows Falls there will be water bypassing all the time; they're putting in a turbine that allows eels to go through low volume efficiently. Mentioned that they won't lose money, but it will allow them to pass, and they've agreed on it.

Fairchild was hoping that Urffer would come and talk about how they would change the dam; change in peak flow rather than a constant flow. Sawyer responded by saying that she addressed that in the last meeting. According to White, the Vernon Dam experiences six feet water fluctuations; said that they take the water at low peak in the evening and turn it into the energy during high peak. Sawyer said that the problem is that solar needs places like Northfield to be at full power in 30 minutes so they can keep from brownouts; they bought the top of Fall Mountain but scrapped it because it costs too much.

White said that this was one of the worst loss of fish along the river in a year in general. Fairchild said that Vermont Yankee used to be constant every day. White mentioned that they lost an entire year of small mouth bass when they lowered the water and all the eggs dried; lots of missing classes of fish. Fairchild asked what continuous flow would look like. White said that the Vernon Dam uses tidal fluctuation, when you go into low water conditions it has an impact on fisheries. The recent storms cranked up the water level to save them. White said that everyone wants to keep an even flow. Sawyer mentioned that the high inflow allows to release more while downstream can take more, there will still be fluctuations.

Henkel asked about the meeting in November; hadn't announced a deadline for public comment period; asked if May 22nd was the end of the period. Sawyer explained that the comments will go to FERC, and they tell the hydro company what they're going to do.

White appreciated a lot of the comments and agrees with them. Henkel was wondering why they were just hearing about the public comment period. White mentioned that the public comment period has been open for years now. Fairchild said that every year is different, and the river is two feet lower than it would be in the summer; strong currents are dumping into Vernon, but the river is running low. White said that yesterday was normal springtime conditions at 39,000 cubic feet while today was 19,000 cubic feet.

The group then talked about a recently opened boat launch in Hinsdale which is too small for the area and most boats to use.

White motioned to approve the comments. Calchera seconded, the motion passed unanimously.

c. Great River Hydro Herbicide Special Permit (Received 4/18/24; Comments due 5/17/24); Impacted Municipalities Include Hinsdale and Walpole

Henkel mentioned that herbicides are much more potent than pesticides and can cause a lot of damage; did not want to support something that involved them. Sawyer mentioned how hard it is to kill some of the plants involved; talked about how they need to continuously treat them to be effective; doesn't have to take a strong herbicide. Fairchild brought up the controversy that surrounds the use of Roundup. Henkel mentioned that every doctor in Iowa knew that Roundup was causing cancer at a very high rate; no question that the chemical was causing lots of cancer in people; said that she would never agree to anything that would put Roundup anywhere near the river. Fairchild mentioned that the plan includes a buffer from the river. Fairchild also asked if they use a licensed applicator rather than someone random. White asked what the purpose is; mentioned that he doesn't react to poison ivy so they should just have someone who doesn't react do the jobs where it's a problem. Henkel asked what other remediation methods there could be; she said they're never going to get rid of everything; asked what other methods would be effective. White mentioned the controversy among the group and that they needed to put their comments in a letter.

The group thought that the maps of the impacted area were not accurate. White said that there is no reason for them to be spraying Roundup on the areas on the Hinsdale map of the Vernon Dam because there is no poison ivy there. Henkel came up with alternative methods of dealing with poison ivy. Fairchild thought that some of it is questionable and lacks reason.

There was lots of confusion and concern with the map areas. Calchera said that they needed more time to review the documents available to be more informed. White looked up how much of the area Great River Hydro owns. Henkel found a USGS study that found that many rivers had Roundup in them; stated that it will end up in the river despite the buffer.

Sawyer submitted a motion to have Terhune and or Garland submit a letter with the Committee's comments after reviewing the information. Henkel seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

d. Town and Member Updates

No Town and Member updates.

4. Adjourn

7:58 PM Henkel made a motion to adjourn; Calchera seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting
July 18, 2024

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