

**Environment Committee
Meeting Summary
March 9, 2009**

Present: Margaret Wirtenberg*, Weston; Robert Byrnes*, Greenwich; Anna Duleep, Leigh Grant, Norwalk; Paul Settelmeyer, SWRPA Chairman; Floyd Lapp, and Nicole Davis, SWRPA;
*Committee co-chairs

Dr. Wirtenberg called the meeting to order at 3:35 P.M.

I. Dr. Wirtenberg made a motion to approve the minutes from the January meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Settelmeyer. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Reconnaissance Study Update

Dr. Lapp updated the committee on the meeting with Congressman Himes at the February MPO meeting. He stated that SWRPA had been working with Congressman Himes staff to have the necessary appropriation made. He commented that if the appropriation was passed, it wouldn't be until the end of the year, with the study beginning in early 2010. He commented that Nita Lowey had been able to move forward so quickly due to a supplemental bill related to other natural disasters in 2007.

Dr. Lapp commented on the responsiveness of the newly elected congressman and his staff and hoped that in 10 months a study will be completed for all the rivers in Fairfield County.

III. Status of Grants

Ms. Davis provided the committee with an update of the status of the grants that SWRPA had applied for in 2008. She provided any summary of the status of the 319 grant concluding that a decision should be made in April. Ms. Davis also indicated that a decision regarding the FEMA grant was also expected in April and that the application had been forwarded on for national review.

Mr. Settelmeyer inquired after the section 25 grant program, indicating he had heard the Stamford had applied for \$1.6 million for the Mill River dam removal. Ms Davis commented that she had no knowledge of any application for funding through section 25. She indicated she had spoke with city staff about the available funds and the possibility of using them for the Mill River Project the end of last year, but never heard anything further.

IV. Legislative Update

Ms. Davis referenced the Table that had been provided in the meeting packet that summarized current bills that may be of interest to the committee. A discussion ensued regarding the tracking efforts of Craig Lader and the status of several bills.

V. Coastal Access

Dr. Lapp commented that the assessment was good overview of the regions resources but that coastal access was a controversial subject. He expounded upon his experience with other organizations that had been involved with coastal access and advised that no further

action be taken. Mr. Settlemeyer stated that there were some changes that needed to be made. He asked that several sites that had been omitted were added and that the DEP's coastal access website be referenced. Mr. Byrnes agreed that the subject was controversial and there was no need for SWRPA to get involved with out a clear objective. Dr. Wirtenberg questioned how the project initiated. Mr. Settlemeyer indicated that it came as a request form a board member at the last executive committee meeting. She further inquired if this were related to the kayak guide. Ms. Davis indicated that it was an unrelated request and most of the information was currently available through the state and UCONN.

VI. Other Business

No other business was discussed

VII. October Environment Summit

Dr. Lapp commented that he had suggested the idea since SWRPA now had the Staff and resources to put together a summit similar in format to the housing summit. He commented that at the previous MPO meeting the municipal officials indicated that Flooding was still a concern for many of the towns. Mr. Byrnes commented that flooding remained a major issue in Greenwich, but the problem was that once the water receded there was no longer an interest in the problem. Dr. Wirtenberg and Mr. Settlemeyer agreed, but indicated the problem with flooding was that you needed money to fix the problem. The discussion continued on how to incorporate flooding and watershed efforts, the target audience, and other possible topics. Mr. Settlemeyer suggested that Jeanette Brown be invited to speak. He indicated he had found her presentation at the Quarterly Planners meeting very interesting and provided the rest of the committee with a summary of her presentation. And further discussions ensued

Ms. Davis was asked to compile a list of topics and send it out before the next meeting. She suggested that the committee begin thinking about speakers and at the next meeting they would decide on a topic, format, and begin exploring speaker options.

Dr. Wirtenberg welcomed Ms. Grant back to the committee, and offered her the position as co-chair. Ms. Grant accepted, but only under the pretense that no one else wanted the position.

The meeting adjourned at 4:34 P.M.

Prepared by Nicole Davis,
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