Natural Resources Committee  
Thursday, February 22, 2018 at 5:00 pm  
In the WRC Conference Room  
Meeting Minutes

Attendance  
Natural Resources Committee present: Susan Hammond, Liisa Kissel (via phone), Gabrielle Ciuffreda.  
Staff present: Emily Davis

The meeting was called to order at 5:08 pm with no quorum present and led by Gabby Ciuffreda.

1. Minutes  
Without a quorum present, the action to approve the minutes from the September 2017 meeting was tabled.

2. Committee Introductions  
The participating members introduced themselves and the municipalities they represent. Gabby Ciuffreda announced herself as the new Chair of the Natural Resources Committee, and shared the intent of the Committee to reset itself so that it can make meaningful contributions to both the WRC and to be a resource in the Region as a whole.  
Emily Davis shared the outlook for some of the work ahead, which will for the near future would mainly be focused on providing input into the Tactical Basin Plan for Basin 12-13 (the Deerfield and other Connecticut-direct tributaries).

3. Delivery of NRC/CWAC Folders and Information  
Emily explained the content of folders that were given to the present Committee members, and briefly described each thing. The overall intent was to provide the members with the available information and resources so that they can meaningfully participate in future NRC activities, and be a resource to their own municipalities. Without many of the members present, these will be re-distributed at a future meeting.

4. NRC’s “Purpose & Objectives” Statement Review  
Gabby lead the conversation saying that part of the reset of the group would be to review and revise the Purpose & Objectives Statement of the Natural Resources Committee, since it was last drafted in 2006, and does not reflect the meaning or intention of the group any longer.  
The group comments are as follows:

OBJECTIVES:
“1. Study land use trends and settlement patterns, and determine lands that have a potential for significant changes in use. Develop and recommend policies to realize the values of such lands while conserving natural resources and retaining working landscapes and wild places.”
- There were comments that the NRC would not actually do the “study,” and that this feels like too far outside the scope of the group. Gabby suggested removing the entire first sentence.
“2. Assess the role that natural resources and rural lands play in our forest, farm, tourism and recreational economies. Identify important values of resource production areas, tourism and human lifestyle and develop and refine strategies to sustain and enhance these values.”
- This statement was confusing, and the group agreed that it could be removed all together.

“3. Identify individuals, organizations, businesses or groups who depend upon and/or utilize, promote and preserve natural resources and rural land values; determine relationships among these individuals and groups and, where possible, promote partnerships and cooperative ventures which will further the Committee purpose, and the development and implementation of the Windham Regional Plan.”
- This seemed generally appropriate, and was not edited much.
- Emily brought up the question about how much the NRC wants to emphasize the preservation of “rural land values” in the work and this language.

“4. Assist with cataloguing and mapping regionally important animal, plant and aquatic habitat, including wetlands, in the Windham Region.”
- This didn’t seem relevant, since the Committee members do not actually do the mapping work.
- Susan Hammond recommended language such as, “When relevant, present the existing map data or layers of... in recommending or creating policy related to natural resources.”

“5. Study resource and land conservation methods, including both regulatory tools (zoning, subdivision regulations, etc.) and non-regulatory tools (acquisition, binding agreements such as conservation easements, tax incentives, educational curricula, etc.).”
- There was some discussion about the role that the WRC plays in its community about land conservation education.
- Liisa Kissel brought up the Act 171 standards, and how the Committee can be a resource for towns working on that planning effort. This lead to a discussion about adding language that reflected the changes laws and regulations around planning in the State.

“6. Assist staff in developing a regional land and natural resource conservation program designed to assist towns and landowners in the implementation of regional and town plan goals and policies.”
- It was confusing to determine what a “conservation program” was.
- Liisa suggested language such as,” acting as a connector, putting together resources, and participating in partnerships.”

“7. Review, comment and make recommendations on natural resource and land use goals, objectives and policies as needed to further the development, updating and implementation of the Windham Regional Plan and the municipal plans of the region’s member towns.”
- There were no proposed edits.

“8. Review, comment on and make recommendations regarding legislative proposals, state agency plans and other proposed or pending actions of local, state and federal government entities and non-governmental organizations which may affect the conservation and intelligent utilization of the region’s natural resources and rural lands."  
- There were no proposed edits.

“9. Review and comment on proposals related to the above responsibilities consistent with the policies and programs of the Windham Regional Plan.”
- Susan Hammond suggested that this statement was redundant. The group agreed to remove this entire statement.
“10. Coordinate with the various WRC committees and provide input to them on natural resource and land use issues.”

- There were no proposed edits.

The group also thought to add to this list:

a) Language about the NRC being a coordinating entity for the Clean Water Advisory Committee, or CWAC.

b) An item relating to the facilitation of local and regional discussions on issues related to the Natural Resources Committee, or otherwise of concern to the community.

c) A list of relevant topics for policy and planning, discussion, study, or advocacy (such as invasive species, forest fragmentation, water quality, flood resilience, community resilience overall, etc).

d) Add in the role of education ourselves and our communities regarding issues affecting the natural environment, especially given the ever-changing nature of the laws and regulations that affect natural resources and water quality planning.

OPERATING PROCEDURES:

“1. The Committee meets to discuss topics as identified above – and appropriate – with the aid of relevant literature, educational media and guest speakers. The Committee will meet its responsibilities as identified above with the assistance of the WRC staff. The Committee will issue a progress report to be presented to the WRC Executive Committee on a regular basis.”

- The Committee only took issue with the phrase “will issue a progress report...”, and thought to change “issue” with “provide.”

“2. Committee members shall, at the discretion and direction of the chair and staff, occasionally be asked to conduct research, make contact with resource people or organizations, and perform other activities between meetings of the committee at large in order to assist in meeting Committee objectives.”

- “Conduct research” felt outside of the scope of the Commissioners. There was a proposed change from, “occasionally be asked to conduct research, make contact with resource people or organizations...” to “occasionally be asked to gather information, conduct outreach with people or organizations...”

“3. The Committee meets monthly. The normal meeting time preferred by most members is 4:00 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month.

- Change to “In general, the Committee will meet monthly, or as needed, at an agreed upon time that is most convenient to the Commissioners.”

5. Other Business:

- Gabby announced that David Deen was going to speak to the Public Policy and Legislative Committee on Monday, 2/26/18, in the WRC’s Conference Room at 12:00. He will give an update on activities in the legislature, particularly with respect to the Clean Water Fund.

- Emily added that the Green River Watershed Alliance would be hosting a suite of public events that the NRC is welcome to attend. The next upcoming event would be a landowner workshop about conservation easements. This would be held on March 24 at Marlboro College, at 9:00-12:30.

- Liisa added that the next meeting date of March 22, 2018 at 5:00 pm was inconvenient, and asked for that to change if possible. Emily and Gabby said that they would confirm if a change was possible for the rest of the group.

- **Next meeting (to be confirmed):** Thursday, March 22, 2018 (fourth Thursday of the month) at 5:00pm, or as determined.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Emily Davis.