Members Present: Gabby Ciuffreda, Chair; Lise Fortin, John Whitman, Andy Toepfer, Linda Hecker, Everett Wilson.

Absent: Kevin Stine, Liisa Kissel, Bill Dunkel, Susan Hammond.

Staff present: Emily Davis (remotely).

Public: None.

Presenter: None.

1. Call to Order
   • Meeting called to order at 5:01 p.m.
   • Action: Minutes from the February 28, 2019 meeting were approved, with a motion by John Whitman, seconded by Linda Hecker. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Additions or Changes to the Agenda
   There were no changes.

3. Legislative Update
   • Status of Act 250 update in the legislature: Gabby Ciuffreda started the meeting by beginning with the proposed update to the Act 250 rules, given its 50th anniversary in the state. She reported, and Emily Davis confirmed, that the legislature would not be making any final decisions on that statute this session, and that work in earnest would pick up in the second half of the biennium.

   • S.96 bill, re: distribution of clean water funding: Emily had provided the Committee with a fact sheet on the major changes that this bill would have on the source and distribution of clean water funding and projects. She reported that the sheet was somewhat dated, since it had moved into the House Natural Resources Committee, and she would provide the Committee members with updated information. Some members of the Committee felt the proposed
legislation was problematic, since it narrowed funding according to a single TMDL target. Emily also said that she would forward the VAPDA position on the legislation.

4. Continued discussion of opportunities for Commissioner engagement

Linda Hecker had reported to the Committee that she has spoken with Mary Ellen Copeland, the Chair of the Dummerston Conservation Commission who has much experience with hosting conservation programming in the Region, about what may be viable educational opportunities for the WRC to pursue. She said that one glaring piece of information from Mary Ellen was that attendance numbers for public educational events as a whole have been declining steadily and rapidly in recent years, and the reasons for that were unknown. She also advised that if programming were to be hosted, keeping it “hyper-local,” or relevant to a particular town or community, would be more effective. Gabby Ciuffreda had asked if there were any particular topics of interest that the attending Commissioners wanted to see an event around. Andy Toepfer offered some ideas about BioFinder workshops, fisheries in partnership with Trout Unlimited, and others. Gabby had asked Andy to develop and provide a list for the Commissioners to pick up during their next meeting.

Linda Hecker also reported that Margo Ghia, District Manager of the Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District, was now going to be in charge of consolidating information about public events, programming, trainings, and funding opportunities in the Windham Region. She will be available to collect information on these events, and send them out in one list serve. To list an event, email: windhamconservationevents@gmail.com

5. Launch of Windham Connectivity Collaborative Project

Emily Davis had announced that the Windham Connectivity Collaborative project was officially awarded funding from the High Meadows Fund, and they had begun their public outreach and announcement of this award. She provided the Commissioners with a copy of the press release, which provided a summary of the initiative and how it may serve the Windham Region and the member municipalities.

She also distributed a spreadsheet of conservation organizations in Windham Region, serving as a baseline inventory of the potential conservation stakeholders and/or partners in this long-term effort. She requested that the Commissioners offer any additional groups or stakeholders that they may have missed. The Commissioners were able to identify a couple of other groups, and large forest-track landowners, which would be relevant stakeholders in habitat connectivity work. Emily said that she would continue to work with Commissioners on refining this list and identify potential strategic partnerships.

Finally, Emily added that the local working group, led by the Marlboro Conservation Commission, would be meeting on Tuesday, April 30th at Marlboro College, and encouraged anyone to attend if they were interested in getting more involved. This was the same night as the WRC Full Commission meeting.

It was requested that Emily continue to report back on significant project updates to the Committee as appropriate.

6. New / Other Business
Gabby Ciuffreda mentioned that the WRC Executive Board had approved the Natural Resources Committee’s request at their February 2019 meeting to provide $250.00 to the Connecticut River Conservancy to support the purchase of the EnviroScape educational table.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 pm, with a motion by John Whitman and seconded by Linda Hecker.