



FARMINGTON RIVER COORDINATING COMMITTEE
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Minutes of Regular FRCC Meeting
Monday, December 19, 2012
Home of Alison Murdock & Mark Lindquist
New Hartford, CT

Present: Tim Anthony (MDC Rep); Ross Delaney (Colebrook Rep); Eileen Fielding (FRWA Alt/Treasurer); Liz Lacy (NPS Rep/FRCC Director); Mark Lindquist (New Hartford Alt); Nick Masi (FRAA Rep); Alison Murdock (New Hartford Rep/Vice Chair); Susan Peterson (CT DEEP Rep/Secretary); Cherie Robinson (Canton Rep/Chair); Mario Santoro (Barkhamsted Alt.)

Guests: Tiffany Caisse; John Forker

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Robinson called the meeting to order between 7:30 - 7:45 p.m.

Because this is the annual FRCC holiday potluck gathering, the meeting is intended to be brief and primarily focus on one agenda item: discussion of the proposed UConn Water Supply Expansion and MDC water supply option.

2. **Introductions:** Ross Delaney introduced himself as the new Colebrook representative. Other committee members introduced themselves.
3. **Minutes and Treasurer’s Report:** Tabled until next meeting.
4. **Old Business:**

Executive Committee:

Nomination and Election of Officers – Lacy announced that Edna Travis would be returning to FRCC as the Colebrook Alternate. She is also willing to serve as Secretary. A motion was made, seconded and passed to make Travis the new Secretary. The entire slate of officers was voted in unanimously.

5. **New Business:**

UConn Water Supply Expansion - MDC is one of the public water supply sources being considered for this proposed expansion. Fielding was asked to provide background history and explain why FRWA is no longer able to participate in reviewing and commenting on this project – including the Environmental Impact Evaluation (EIE) process currently underway.

FRWA has opposed expansion of the MDC system many times in the past – most recently with regard to the expansion to Portland in 1998. MDC grew tired of this constant opposition. The parties – MDC, FRWA and the Town of Portland – agreed to sit down and discuss. It took about a year to work out the Portland Agreement. MDC agreed that when the Barkhamsted and Nepaug Reservoirs were used to capacity, they would have to use the Glastonbury Wellfields before they would use water from the West Branch. FRWA decided this was worthwhile and agreed to this arrangement whereby it would be okay for MDC to sell water outside of its service area as long as it stayed within the limits described. In turn, the agreement also specified that FRWA could not object to future MDC ventures outside of its service area, as long as MDC stayed within the agreed limits.

In the intervening years, due to staff and board changes, etc., FRWA “forgot” about this agreement until they were recently reminded by MDC lawyers.

Under current UConn Water Supply Expansion proposal, 1.93 mgd of additional water is needed. Additional water supply options being considered include:

- Connecticut Water Company (CWC)
- Windham Water Works (WWW)
- MDC

MDC option was just added to the plan this past Spring. It would call for an additional 20 miles of pipeline.

The EIE came out in November and included a list of 7 options: 4 were not workable; the 3 remaining are listed above.

(Not remembering that the Portland Agreement was in effect) FRWA moved forward and looked at the UConn Water Supply Expansion proposal and MDC water supply option in detail. The 5 mgd diversion sounds very large but FRWA was not upset about this. It was more concerned about the precedent that this might set for the future, in terms of potential demand along the pipeline route and at UConn. Fielding sent an e-mail to the FRWA Board regarding commenting on the EIE. The Board supported the concept and Fielding moved forward, and put a lot of time and energy into putting together comments.

On the day of the public comment meeting (Tues.), Fielding received a phone call from MDC saying that FRWA could not comment on the project because of the Portland Agreement. The matter then went to FRWA's attorneys. FRWA and MDC agreed to meet and discuss. Fielding just attended that meeting prior to the FRCC meeting. The parties went over a lot of information – including an explanation of why MDC became one of UConn's potential water supply options.

WWW is being evaluated as a potential option because of its proximity to UConn. However, WWW doesn't really want to be a part of this project and is not a willing partner.

CWC had a proposal that would have relied upon MDC supplying them with a certain amount of water. However, MDC said that they could not sell water to CWC under these circumstances because of MDC's status as a non-profit entity and related rate paying concerns, etc. So, CWC had to go back to the drawing board and figure out some other options. However, without MDC water as part of the mix, CWC prices start to go up.

Apparently, this is when UConn approached MDC about putting together a plan that could be considered as another option. There were questions about the connection/extension being paid for by taxpayers. However, UConn indicated that they would be paying this back over time.

MDC also said that it has been using less water from the Barkhamsted and Nepaug reservoirs over the last 10-15 years because water supply demands have dropped.

Fielding said that during the FRWA - MDC meeting, MDC needed to hear that FRWA understood that MDC was not proposing to suck water out of the Farmington River – contrary to how the story has been portrayed by some of the press. Some of the topics that FRWA raised with MDC included: assurances about maintaining a certain level of flow in the river, regardless of climate change; and concerns about warm water releases impacting fisheries in instances where reservoirs have been drawn down to low levels. MDC agreed that they need to consult with fisheries biologists. FRWA also made a point of clarifying with MDC that it is okay for FRWA to educate citizens and discuss the issue, even if they cannot oppose the project. Fielding said that MDC and FRWA both agreed that they should have been in touch with each other first - before things got to this point.

Since FRWA can no longer comment on the project, Rivers Alliance of Connecticut may pick up the issue. However, Rivers Alliance would need to consider the impact of the proposed project on rivers across the State.

Following Fielding's synopsis of the situation, FRCC members discussed the UConn Water Supply Expansion project. Comments, concerns and questions included the following:

- Long distance transfer of public water supply may set a major precedent – especially if drinking water supplies become more scarce and valuable in the future;

- Water quantity demands by UConn and others along the pipeline route may increase over time;
- Is it possible to modify legal language in Portland Agreement to address some of these concerns?
- Should some probabilistic studies be done? What if public water supply demands in the Farmington Valley or Hartford area increase over time?
- How might increased water supply demands affect the West Branch 50 years from now?
- Differing perspectives on trout fisheries, and the fact that most trout are introduced species;
- Is everything possible being done from a water conservation perspective?
- Consideration of this past year's drought situation and impacts

Lacy said that prior to this meeting, FRCC had reviewed the project information and has a list of concerns that relate back to the Upper Farmington W&S areas' "Outstanding Resource Values" (ORVs). The Upper Farmington is one of the Northeast's premiere trout fishing streams and is dependent upon cold water and adequate flows. FRCC's mission is to protect and enhance W&S resources. Robinson asked Lacy if she has enough information to draft comments for review, and she said "yes". Lacy will not send draft comments to FRWA and MDC representatives as they need to recuse themselves from this process. Peterson said that CT DEEP is submitting its own set of comments, so she will also bow out of reviewing draft FRCC comments.

6. Adjourn: 8:15 p.m. The meeting adjourned for the annual holiday potluck gathering.