



HOUSATONIC REST OF RIVER MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

April 8, 2022; Virtual Meeting

1. Introductions. T. Matuszko opened the meeting at 9:02am, announced it was being recorded, being held under the virtual meeting provisions approved by the state, and asked each person to introduce themselves and state the community they represented. He then introduced members present from BRPC and the EPA.

Attending the meeting were the following Committee members:

Pat Carlino, Lee Select Board & Representative
Channing Gibson, Lenox Representative
Chris Rembold, Great Barrington Town Planner, Assistant Town Manager & Representative
Steve Shatz, Stockbridge Representative
Rene Wood, Sheffield Select Board & Representative

and: Tom Matuszko, BRPC
Melissa Provencher, BRPC
Lauren Gaherty, BRPC
Dean Tagliaferro, EPA Region 1; left at 9:42am
Kelsey Dunville, EPA Region 1; left at 9:42am

Public: None

2. Review of minutes of March 18, 2022 meeting. *A motion to accept the minutes as presented was made by C. Gibson, seconded SP. Carlino, and approved 5-0 on a roll call vote.*

3. Public Comments. None

4. Comments submitted to the EPA Administrative Record

Comments on the Supplemental Phase 1A Cultural Resources Survey Work Plan were submitted on 3-28-22 and are posted on BRPC's website <https://berkshireplanning.org/initiatives/housatonic-rest-of-river-municipal-committee/>. This is for public information as the comments submitted were approved at the last Executive Committee meeting. Each town was invited to link from its ROR webpage to BRPC's.

5. Status of Cleanup Activities; Community engagement strategies.

M. Provencher opened this discussion conveying the Committee's goals of being transparent with communities and providing timely community access to EPA information, such as on work schedules/plans. The Committee wants to limit, preferably avoid, community or citizen surprises. C. Gibson noted that no information is insignificant, and the timing of information will help create a sense of normalcy with the clean-up activities, rather than having informational highs and lows. The Committee understood the extra work involved in communications with the press, such as the Eagle or Edge, and "formal communications." The Committee also recognizes there will always be those who are not informed, no matter how much information is available.

K. Dunville shared efforts underway to address these issues. The notices now sent to BRPC will be sent to Town Administrators/Town Manager. Email addresses should be provided to M. Provencher. Timing of information was reviewed as a covid-19 section in the Eagle now would have little to say given the level of activity. A blog was discussed, and EPA will work with M. Provencher to continue this discussion.

Also discussed was the potential mission expansion of the facilitators now used for CCC meetings. EPA wants to expand its community outreach; a variety of venues were reviewed, from open house style meetings to poster sessions and workshops. K. Dunville was open to suggestions; C. Gibson and P. Carlino will review the needs of their two towns. While the contract has not been finalized, the goal is to provide more outreach activities beyond the quarterly CCC meetings. More to discuss in the May timeframe.

EPA is now attending council meetings – Pittsfield is upcoming, holding impact meetings, and expanding its stakeholder list to include other groups, such as land trusts. Meeting formats and potential disruptions were discussed, along with the importance of local input, communication mode, and timeliness. Meetings need to be held prior to activities occurring in a neighborhood. Maps, either paper posted or electronically available, to show what is going on, where and when, were suggested to let the public follow along and increase timely, local awareness. Information kiosks, such as on the Lenox footbridge, depending on its ownership, have been successfully used in other river cleanup communities.

Also discussed were EPA limits on releasing information until available; no anticipated impact on GE investigative work by an Appeal's Court appeal, unless the judge so orders; and GE currently being behind in its investigative work, in part because of a late start. D. Tagliaferro estimated, while it was to be a 2 year process and now about 2 years from the initial start date, GE is likely 2 years from completion. Construction work will begin first at the Upland Disposal Facility. A discussion on hydraulic plans ensued; considerable engineering will be required.

6. Other business & next meeting. No other business. Committee members were asked to hold Friday 4-15-22 at 9am for a possible meeting.

5. Executive Session – Legal Strategy and Adjournment. On a motion made by S. Shatz, seconded by C. Rembold, and passed by 4-0 roll call vote, the Rest of River Municipal Committee went into Executive Session, per MGL C.30a, §21(a) pursuant to purpose 3, to discuss their strategy with respect to litigation and the ongoing appeal concerning the Rest of River cleanup, as the Chair found that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the Rest of River municipalities' litigation position. The committee stated it would not come back into open session. C. Gibson was not available for the vote. The Committee went into Executive Session at 9:45am.

Respectfully submitted by

Rene Wood,
Sheffield's Representative

Meeting Materials:
Meeting Agenda 4-8-22
Meeting Minutes of 3-18-22