

Executive Committee Meeting

Zoom Meeting

August 4, 2021

1:00pm to 2:30pm

MEETING NOTES

ATTENDEES

Richard Carey, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Caitlin Chaffee, Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NBNERR)
Richard Friesner, NEIWPCC
Sue Kiernan, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM)
Regina Lyons, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA—Region 1)
Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon
Susan Sullivan, NEIWPCC
Caitlyn Whittle, EPA—Region 1
Mike Gerel, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP)
Julia Bancroft, NBEP

INTRODUCTION

Regina Lyons, the Executive Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:00pm, asked everyone to introduce themselves, and summarized the meeting agenda.

PREFERRED NEW HOST OPTION

Regina offered a brief overview of the process used by the NBEP Ad Hoc Host Subcommittee to identify and vet candidates and the status of the search. The subcommittee started with three potential candidates: two nonprofits and a university. One nonprofit dropped out, so the other two candidates were considered in parallel. Calls were held with both candidates during June and July to ensure they understood the host role, the National Estuary Program (NEP) approach, and desired host qualifications. These conversations were followed by internal conversations at both hosts to see if they could get to a 'yes' on whether they wanted to be further considered. The leading candidate, [Roger Williams University](#) (RWU) in Bristol RI, offered a yes on July 21st, while the other candidate decided to drop out. RWU's programs ([Law School Marine Affairs Institute](#) and [School of Natural and Social Sciences](#)) and new strategic plan have great synergy with the NEP community-based approach, NBEP's mission, and priority services. There are many logistics to figure out between now and September 31st, but here are some highlights of what is known:

- NBEP will be live under the Assistant Provost for Global and Community Engagement;
- All three existing NBEP staff would become employees of RWU with an ideal start date of late September to facilitate benefit start on October 1st;
- RWU's indirect will be significantly lower as they apply a 20% indirect rate only to personnel (not contract or subawards, which makes up nearly half of NBEP's budget);
- Fringe rate is also lower at 40.53%, compared to 46% at NEIWPCC;

- RWU is amenable to the NBEP office remaining at RIDEM; and
- RWU will be provided the draft Work Plan, Budget, and Match forms and is aware they must submit an FY2021 grant application ASAP for award by October 1st.

With this as context, the Ad Hoc Host Subcommittee has formally recommended that the Executive Committee accept RWU's offer to serve as NBEP's host and pursue next steps to formalize the relationship. Sue Kiernan mentioned she was a member of the subcommittee (and involved in past host searches) and feels very good about RWU as NBEP's next host.

Regina called for a vote on whether to recommend that the Steering Committee consider with the Ad Hoc Host Subcommittee's recommendation and initiate steps for Roger Williams University to become NBEP's new host. Sue Kiernan offered a motion to support the recommendation, with a second from Caitlin Chaffee. The committee unanimously voted to advance RWU to the Steering Committee for discussion and possible formal approval later today.

Some priority next steps include:

- EPA to provide NBEP's final draft Work Plan, Budget, and Match Forms to RWU if approved by the Executive Committee later in this meeting;
- Depending on the degree of revisions included, Executive and Steering Committee *may* need to approve the final Work Plan, Budget, and Match package prepared by RWU;
- RWU would use these final materials to prepare and submit a FY2021 grant application covering a three-year award of \$1.79M to EPA as soon as possible to enable an October 1st award; and
- A condition of RWU's willingness to be considered is that NBEP and RWU work together to establish and approve formal bylaws by December 31, 2021.

Regina offered thanks to the subcommittee and this committee for their support and patience with the new host search process.

REVISED FY2021 WORK PLAN, BUDGET, AND MATCH

Work Plan

Mike Gerel updated the group on revisions to the draft Work Plan based on committee feedback since their June meeting (changes were highlighted yellow). Some highlights included:

- Replaced Watershed-Scale Technical Assistance Task with more narrow Blackstone Initiative Task;
- Added SNEP Support Task;
- Explained that Executive and Steering Committee will review and approve annual work plans and budgets;
- Clarified that the Host will lead contracting and new staff hiring and added specifics about any contract support envisioned under tasks; and
- Included day-to-day outreach activities in Strategic Outreach task.

Additional input provided at the meeting included:

- Retain approval of the Work Plan and Budget as a first step before Steering Committee approval; and
- Ensure time for preparation of their Individual Work Plan and typical administrative tasks is included in staff's work plans.

Budget

Mike walked through revisions to the draft Budget. Here are some highlights:

- Added new fringe rate of 40.53% and new indirect rate of 20% only on personnel;
- Personnel costs are now higher, up from \$429K to \$596K because they now include new hire (not proposed previously) and 20 months of personnel (up from 19 months);
- Removes contract for Julia Twichell as she is not interested in pursuing one at this time;
- Specifies Vision 2032 contracting is for writing/strategy and communications;
- Upped total for subawards to \$650K (up from \$617k); and
- Added new TNC match commitment.

No additional input was provided by the committee.

Match

Finally, Mike shared the status of non-federal match. NBEP needs \$1.79M, which is significantly higher than most years based on the nature of the award to the new host. He noted that we have \$873K from TNC this year and RIDEM last year, so we need another \$898K. Mike asked that committee members submit completed forms to Mike Gerel by August 23rd at the latest as RWU would like to have all match in place at grant application submittal to EPA.

Regina called for a vote on whether the Executive Committee recommends that the Steering Committee send the draft FY2021 Work Plan, Budget, and Match Forms to RWU for their consideration, revision, and presentation to both committees for approval at a later date if required. Caitlin Chaffee offered a motion to approve, with a second from Regina Lyons. The package will now advance the package to the Steering Committee for consideration later today.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Notify the Steering Committee at their meeting later today that the Executive Committee recommends acceptance of RWU as NBEP's new host.
2. Notify the Steering Committee at their meeting later today that the Executive Committee recommends approval of the draft Work Plan, Budget, and Match Forms.
3. If the Steering Committee approves RWU as the next host and the draft Work Plan, Budget, and Match Forms, EPA to provide these grant application support materials to RWU ASAP.
4. Executive Committee members with match to commit should submit completed Match Forms to Mike Gerel by August 23rd.
5. RWU would use these final materials to prepare and submit a FY2021 grant application covering a three-year award of \$1.79M to EPA as soon as possible.
6. RWU, NBEP, and its committees create draft bylaws for consideration at the next Executive Committee meeting in October.

Meeting adjourned at 2:20pm