

**Rouge River Advisory Council (RRAC)**  
**Draft Meeting Summary**  
**April 18, 2023 via Hybrid at Friends of the Rouge Office**



**List of Attendees:**

**Voting Members:**

Marie McCormick, Chair - *Present*  
Dan Ballnik, Vice Chair - *Present*  
Bill Craig, SPAC representative - *Present*  
Jacy Garrison, Oakland County - *Present*  
Erma Leaphart, Sierra Club - *Present*  
Doug Moore, Livonia - *Absent*  
Noel Mullett, Wayne Co. DPS - *Present*  
John O'Meara, ECT - *Present*  
Sally Petrella, Friends of Rouge Park - *Present*  
Heather Rice, Washtenaw Co. WRC Office - *Absent*  
Brandy Siedlaczek, Southfield - *Present*  
Tyler Sonoga, Farmington Hills - *Present*  
Dean Tuomari, Citizen - *Present*

**Others Present:**

Chris O'Meara, ARC	Jen Tewkesbury, EGLE
Tennille Newsome, ARC	Chris Raschke, Dearborn
Annette DeMaria, ARC	Olivia Williams, UM Student
Alice Bailey, ARC	Erin Cassady, FOTR
Ashley Allen, HRC	Shawn Duke, Stantec
Stephanie Petriello,	Sam Davis, FOTR
OCWRC	Saeid Alawathi, Dearborn
Jennifer Maude, Citizen	Laura Eaton, FOTR
Eric Wahrman, DWSD	John Buszkiewicz, MDNR

**Introductions**

Marie McCormick called the meeting to order and completed roll call by calling on attendees listed in the Teams meeting. Attendees gave their name, affiliation and title. Chris O'Meara reminded attendees to add their name and affiliation in the chat box. Introductions were completed.

**Approval of Meeting Summary**

Marie McCormick reviewed the meeting summary from January 17, 2023 and asked if there were any questions. There were none. The meeting summary of the January 17, 2023, meeting was approved with no comments. The motion to approve the meeting summary was made by Sally Petrella and seconded by Bill Craig and passed unanimously.

**Old Business**

Marie McCormick stated there is no old business, but it will be kept on the agenda as a placeholder for the future.

Bill Craig made a request for a meeting with the committee to further clarify what items are to be voted on (bylaws section 3.4) by the RRAC voting members.

**PAC Business**

**a. Bylaws Implementation Process**

Marie McCormick reviewed what voting members vote for and how you become a voting member. Some of the items have been discussed and approved by the group, which include that members must attend at least two meetings and show interest.

- **Conflict of Interest Statement (vote to approve policy)**

Marie mentioned a voting member is required to sign a Conflict of Interest Statement. Chris O'Meara stated the Conflict of Interest Statement is in the RRAC meeting packet and members could email them to Chris O'Meara or hand in to Tennille Newsome in person.

Marie asked for a motion to approve the Conflict of Interest Statement policy as it is written within the packet. The motion to approve the Conflict of Interest Statement was made by Brandy Siedlaczek and seconded by Sally Petrella and passed unanimously. Marie asked if there was any discussion, there was none. Marie stated the Conflict of Interest Statement is part of the RRAC policy and will be a requirement for voting members and officers.

Bill Craig asked for a deadline and where to send the Conflict of Interest Statement to be kept in the file. Marie McCormick stated the Conflict of Interest Statement is only signed by voting members. Marie also mentioned the executive committee would also have access to all statements. Chris O'Meara stated to please email the Conflict of Interest Statements to her or hand in to Tennille in person. Marie set the deadline to turn the Conflict of Interest Statement in by April 28, 2023.

- **Voting member list (for information)**

Tennille Newsome shared her screen of the RRAC Voting Members. John O'Meara wanted to state that since there are two vacancies on the voting members list, that doesn't mean those are the only vacancies available and that is just a minimum. John O. mentioned that if you have interest, to please submit your information.

Bill Craig asked if there was any others to submit a request. Marie mentioned they have not received any formal requests at this time. Marie stated Erma Leaphart invited Eric Wahrman with DWSD and Sally Petrella invited Donna Kashian with Wayne State. Bill Craig stated at one point there was an interest by Shawn Duke. Shawn Duke stated he is interested, he just wanted to hear more about the process. Marie stated she is in the process of developing an RRAC Interest form, so interested parties can submit a bio and Conflict of Interest Statement with it. John O'Meara asked Marie to send the RRAC Interest form to voting members for approval. Chris O'Meara mentioned to Marie that she confirmed in the bylaws that in order to meet the bylaw requirement minimum of nine with the two vacancies (Business and Academia) that the RRAC needs to have those two vacancies filled. Marie mentioned that possibilities could be Shawn Duke for Business and Donna Kashian for Academia vacancies. Shawn Duke stated he has no issue with the Conflict of Interest form and is more than happy to move forward. Marie asked Shawn Duke if he attended more than two meetings this year and Shawn said yes.

Marie McCormick stated she will send out the draft RRAC Interest form and once it is approved, she will submit it to Shawn Duke, Donna Kashian and any other interested parties. Once it is approved, it will be included on the RRAC website to be filled out as necessary.

## **SPAC Report**

Bill Craig thanked Chris O'Meara for imbedding the links to the reports in the RRAC meeting packet. Bill Craig reported the following:

### **SPAC Meeting**

Bill Craig reported there was a virtual SPAC meeting on February 6, 2023 and the meeting minutes were attached to the RRAC meeting packet. Bill also mentioned the RRAC is linked to the SPAC website for more exposure. Some highlights were:

- Habitat subcommittee report
- SPAC EJ-DEI subcommittee report from Kathy Evans in Marie's absence and progress is being made on that subcommittee
- PAC reports from all AOCs expressing their status with progress being made across the state
- Notice went out to the chairs of various AOCs, one was the Rouge for Marie McCormick to have a designee for SPAC representative and an alternate for the 2024-2025 term
- Next meeting will be virtual on May 31, 2023 via Teams

- EPA and EGLE report

### **SPAC Habitat Subcommittee**

Bill Craig reported the SPAC Habitat Committee last held was March 22, 2023. John O'Meara, Eric Diesing, Noel Mullet and Dan Ballnik were in attendance. Some highlights were:

- Discussions focused around maintenance, monitoring, stewardship and funding for AOC projects
- All AOCs are in different stages with their projects
- Future topics include CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas); better understanding of MiCorps in relationship with citizens and scientists to get monitoring and stewardship to the habitat projects
- Next meeting is virtual on May 3, 2023 at 11:00am; there is no agenda at this time. Sally Petrella asked if a notice of the meeting was sent out. Bill Craig said not yet, he hopes to do it this week.

John O'Meara mentioned to Bill that some usual attendees will not be attending the May 3, 2023 meeting as the IJC Water Quality Board is having their meetings in Detroit and the Rouge will be highlighted with tours. Bill Craig stated he would discuss that with Jen Tewkesbury and it is likely the meeting will still be held. Erma stated her calendar shows the meeting at 11:00am.

- **Wayne County Parks 5 year Parks and Recreation Plan (2023-2027)**

Marie McCormick shared her screen of the Plan for those that were in person. Bill Craig stated that most communities have a 5 year master plan that is a requirement for grant funding and this is a wish list for what is requested. Bill Craig wanted to advise the RRAC that the AOC projects are recognized within the Plan as most of the RRAC projects are on Wayne County Parks property. Bill stated for habitat project as it relates to the habitat committee how do "we" get short term/long term stewardship and what is the relationship with the surrounding partners with Wayne County Parks. Bill Craig mentioned a meeting with Wayne County Parks to get a better understanding as to what their role will be or could be with the habitat projects. He also went on to say that Wayne County Parks does not have any of the following on staff: Natural Areas Manager, Horticulturist, Arborist, Invasive Species team, Aquatic Specialist, Woody Management team.

Marie McCormick stated FOTR is currently working on a formal Memorandum of Understanding with Wayne County Parks to address those positions as FOTR can facilitate some of the work that is needed to be done to maintain the natural areas.

Bill Craig mentioned that he currently is affiliated with Holiday Preserve Association and unclear whether or not he would have to disclose it on the Conflict of Interest Form. Holiday Preserve Association is nonprofit and they have had a relationship with Wayne County Parks for 35 years and in their Plan they are requesting \$5M for an infrastructure improvement project in a nature preserve involving the bridges. Bill stated that the problem with the Plan aligns with the RRAC's concern with the Holiday Preserve Association that you can reserve funding for projects but do not have staff to maintain projects and could eventually fail.

Sally Petrella agreed from the Friends of the Rouge Park perspective that there is a need for nature area managers.

Marie McCormick appreciates Bill for being an advocate and the topic was important to bring up.

### **SPAC EJ-DEI Subcommittee**

Marie McCormick reported that the subcommittee is working the following:

- Developing a one page fact sheet about DEI and send to the EJ-DEI subcommittee representatives
- Develop a PAC invitation package that would discuss responsibilities of a PAC member

Marie stated she will draft something like that and send to the RRAC. Marie stated there have been three goals that have been identified by the subcommittee and one is that they are going to be sending a letter to the individual PACs asking them to identify existing EJ-DEI activities that are taking place within the individual PACs.

Marie mentioned that Erma, who is a part of the EJ-DEI subcommittee as well, put together a document (that Marie shared on her screen to those who were in person) discussing "What is Justice 40?" as one of the goals as the subcommittee is to do a better job of integrating Justice 40 initiatives into the AOC program. Marie went on to explain that Justice 40 is an initiative of a whole government to ensure the federal agencies work with states and communities to deliver at least 40% of the overall benefits from relevant federal investments to disadvantaged communities and must positively impact disadvantaged communities. Marie thanked Erma for putting the document together. Marie stated once the document is solidified, she will send it out to the RRAC. Marie asked if there was anything Erma wanted to add. Erma stated the interpreting benefit in positive impact can be subjective but think about what you are doing with the projects and how it may improve the quality of project.

John O'Meara added as to the subjectiveness is that it allows the ability for one to broaden the answer to the question of benefit so that there is a better chance of fulfilling that Justice 40 requirement.

#### SPAC Representative Upcoming Vacancy

Bill Craig reported that the vacancy for SPAC representative is still available and he will continue fulfilling his term. In addition, Bill will also be attending the AOC conference. He went on to explain that over the past 25 years, he found the experience very rewarding, met interesting people, made friendships, shared information, learned some things and his expenses were paid. Bill also mentioned that this vacancy would be for someone who has the time to represent the council and the RRAC. Bill is willing to discuss the SPAC representative with anyone to assist in determining if they should volunteer.

Marie McCormick stated as a standing invitation to the RRAC members that it is an opportunity for someone else to step in the role. If anyone is interested, let Marie McCormick know.

#### **EGLE Update**

Jen Tewkesbury reported the following:

- Effective March 31<sup>st</sup>, Rick Hobrila retired after 47 years; Melanie Foose is now the Unit Supervisor and will take over Rick's role. With Melanie's new position, that leaves EGLE down one AOC Coordinator, so Jen has taken over Kalamazoo River AOC which brings her to covering four AOCs.
- BUI removal: there are no BUI removals and weren't anticipating any this year. Their first focus will be the fish and wildlife BUIs, once all the projects are complete.
- Lower Rouge Old Channel Project: The ACOE is still working with EPA GLNPO on the dredge units and feasibility. Shipping is still maintained through the channel and they hope to get out there this summer and that the project is still moving forward. Jen added a safety note that the ACOE advised EGLE that they lost one of their staff at the LRoc site (old Detroit Coke site) who was attacked by a group of dogs. EGLE has been notified that they are not allowed to go on that site alone. Jen wanted to advise the RRAC if they are around that area to be cognizant of surroundings. Jen mentioned that EGLE employees are currently looking for guidance on what they can do. Jen mentioned that the dogs have been a complaint issues before but the state and federal side was not aware.
- Main channel Project: is still moving forward and they have been holding meetings between EGLE, EPA and partnership on non-federal sponsors (Marathon, Ford, etc.). They are currently gathering data to get the feasibility study together to get estimates. EGLE would like to use infrastructure funds available to offset costs, but there is a tight timeline. April 26<sup>th</sup> is a potential site visit for non-federal sponsors.

- Habitat projects: EPA is up to date and communicating with EGLE regularly. There are some projects in the pipeline for a couple of years.
- EGLE will be doing PFAS sampling in the Rouge this summer to get baseline data so it can be managed. Sally Petrella asked Jen if it was for fish, sediment or water. Jen believes it is just for water and sediment but she will double check to confirm. Sally also asked if there were target areas. Jen responded that they are still putting their plan together.

### **EPA Update**

Jen Tewkesbury reported Chris Korleski, the Director at EPA GLNPO since 2011 will be retiring at the end of the year. Jen stated it is a huge loss, as he has always fought hard for funding and has overseen all GLRI since it began. They plan to hire a new director this fall.

Sally Petrella asked Jen if Melanie Foose had signed the QAPP. Jen T. responded Melanie is having it reviewed by their biologist.

Bill Craig stated Mark Truckman and Rose Ellison have retired.

### **Rouge AOC Grants Update**

#### EGLE PAC Grant

John O. reported that the EGLE PAC support grant had been signed by the state so all work is official. That is what Sally was asking Jen about the QAPP so FOTR can begin monitoring. The PAC grant is for 3 years of support.

#### Status of Projects

John O'Meara stated there is a status report of the habitat restoration projects included in the RRAC meeting packet. John went on to say there are quite a few projects that will be completed by this summer and there are quite a few that will be beginning this summer (Phoenix, Wilcox, Riverview). PFAS is not a required element when it comes to sampling unless through the permitting process that the site locations are within an area where there is PFAS potential.

John asked if there were any questions. Sally Petrella wanted to clarify if the PFAS was in relationship to EGLE's sampling or in relationship to the project. John O. responded PFAS potentially may be required in relationship to projects but only through the permitting process and only for areas EGLE has known PFAS concerns.

### **Project Presentation**

Alice Bailey with ECT shared her screen for a presentation on the Colonial And Venoy habitat restoration projects. Some highlights were:

- GLRI, RRAC, Wayne County Parks, EPA and ARC
- GLRI Measures of Progress (Colonial)
  - o Focus Area 2-Invasive Species; 4 acres of invasive species management
  - o Focus Area 4-Habitat and Species; 14.5 acres of habitat
- Grant Objectives (Colonial & Venoy)
- Project Activities
- Photographs of each site

Marie asked if there were any questions. John O. wanted to point out that there is another project for reforestation work along the Lower Rouge that the ARC has a contract with FOTR to execute. Part of that area overlaps with Colonial Park but is separate from the Colonial Park Project.

Marie McCormick thanked John and Alice for their updates.

Dan Ballnik asked if drone work had been documented for all these projects. John O'Meara stated there is on some projects but it depends on the site and funding for the projects. John mentioned John Gundry with Wayne County Parks is doing additional drone footage for projects as well.

### **Other Related Watershed Projects**

#### Education and Outreach Grant Update

Marie McCormick reported that FOTR is in progress working with Wayne County Parks and respective community groups to build capacity internally. They are hosting an event on May 20, 2023 with Old Village Association, Plymouth Pollinators, City of Plymouth and Wayne County Parks doing a large invasive species removal day, along with trash removal. Wayne County is providing a chipper and road control. FOTR will be bringing the volunteers.

#### Livonia Bell Branch

Annette DeMaria reported the City of Livonia's stream improvement project is currently out for bid for construction to remove 400' of concrete channel and naturalization of where concrete was. Annette wanted to clarify that it is a City of Livonia project.

#### Other Related Projects

None at this time.

### **New Business**

#### Future Meetings

Marie McCormick reported

- **RRAC:** July 18, 2023 (virtual), October 17, 2023 (hybrid) – FOTR is happy to continue hosting
- **AOC Conference:** Green Bay, Wisconsin – September 12-14, 2023  
Marie McCormick reported that Herman, trails manager with FOTR will be a featured speaker and speaking on behalf the drydock pop up as an engagement tool for historically overburdened communities for developing engagement in AOCs
- **Great Lakes Restoration Celebration:** The Henry Ford – September 22, 2023  
Marie McCormick reported this is the fourth Great Lakes Restoration Celebration. There are some invited elected officials that will be speaking. All regional AOCs are invited. John O. clarified that it is any system between Saginaw Bay and Maumee and it does not need to be an AOC. Chris O'Meara stated there was no cost to attend. Marie asked if there were any questions or comments, there were none.

### **Comments**

#### Members

Marie McCormick asked if there were any comments or questions. Bill Craig wanted to check with Jacy Garrison if she knew Eric Diesing from CRWC who is now with Oakland County. Bill stated Eric came from CRWC and will and is a great resource for the habitat committee. Jacy confirmed she does know Eric.

Marie introduced and welcomed Lauren Eaton as FOTR's monitoring manager and Sally is now the watershed ecologist. Lauren will take over the administrative duties of managing the monitoring work. Sally will remain full time for a while and plans to scale back.

#### General Public

Marie McCormick asked if there were any comments or questions, there were none.

### **Review of Action Items**

- RRAC to schedule committee meeting to determine voting items for voting members
- Marie motioned for the approval of the Conflict of Interest Statement for voting members and it was approved
- Members to email signed Conflict of Interest Statement to Chris O'Meara or give to Tennille in person
- Marie to email draft voting member interest form to current voting members for approval
- RRAC members interested in becoming SPAC representative to reach out to Marie

Bill Craig made the motion to adjourn the meeting, Dan Ballnik seconded the Motion. The meeting was adjourned.