

Fish and Wildlife Funding Task Force Meeting Minutes

10/16/06 5 PM – 7 PM 4th Floor Conference Room, Pavilion Building, Montpelier

Attendees:

Committee Members:

Evan Hughes
Jim Shallow
James Ehlers
Richard Greenough
Paul Karczmarczyk
Rick Schoonover
Elizabeth Courtney
Craig Lantagne
Terry Wilson (Did not sign in?)

Non-Members:

Steve Wright
Anne Winchester
Tom Decker
Sher Yacono
Jamey Fidel
George Gay
Jason Aronowitz

JE – Introductory remarks. Noted Evan Hughes getting mail late.

JS handed out draft agenda.

JE: Steve Adams is not requiring that we meet the report due date, but I think we should.

All: Agenda agreed to.

JE: Do we want to do a public meeting or just ask for comments? There have been many polls, etc., already.

EH: Internet most expedient.

RS: One public meeting 1st week of December would help.

EC: Warn one meeting, along with asking for written comments.

EH: What about Bill Doyle's survey?

JE: Survey November 2000 shows Vermonters' willingness to pay.

JS: The public meeting should be in a central location.

CL: One public meeting...

PK: One public meeting, needs thorough documentation.

EC: We should state, "Bring written comments." (to the public)

JE: Unanimous to have one public meeting.

EC: I will chair public meeting subcommittee.

TW: I will co-chair.

JE: Public meeting after New Year's. Attach their points as an addendum. I am willing to rely on the committee's expertise for the body of the report.

JS: What is our goal for the public meeting? A) a source of ideas, or B) comments on our draft? Source would be an earlier meeting, comments would be later.

EC: If we want public reaction, we want a January date.

CL: We need public involvement.

JS: We will need to inform other state depts. of possible impact to their budgets (charges for F&W services).

EC: Motion – to hold a public hearing in early January for immediate written comments on a draft proposal. Location VTC, Randolph. Liz Courtney and Terry Wilson acting as co-chairs. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Tom Decker and Sher Yacono – Fish and Wildlife Budget Presentation

JE: Please give us a statement of need; what could you use, in priority order.

PK: Do you track in-kind contributions? These are Fed-matchable.

EH: What is your overtime ratio on wardens. If it is over 10%, not good use of money. Is Fed \$ going up or down?

TD: On the whole, going up. Some are sustainable, some not.

JE: According to Rep. Adams, our charge is to raise revenue, not defend the expenditures. F&W can defend their management.

CL: Isn't a portion of grants available to administer them?

TD: Depends on if we built it into the grant. We're working on it. I will have your need list information for you in 3 weeks.

JE: Look at the June 1990 funding study page 6 for the list of recommendations. "Will need \$500K for reimbursement on environmental issues by the 1990's" P 30 -33 is the response of management including the acceptability of funding mechanism.

RS, JS: How much is 1% of Rooms and Meals?

JE: Low hanging fruit - What are the most acceptable funding sources?

JE: How big do we want to think? Size of the problem?

RS: Charge out "Technical assist" \$600-700K environmental.

JS: Can the above be in the new fee bill – from DEC?

JE: I look at what the other side would think. Problem with DEC or with the Chamber of Commerce etc on raising fees.

JS: need to look at balance. Now \$2 million GF; could go down if fees go up.

JE: This is the bulk of what we will be meeting about.

JS: I'll make a list of what other states do.

JE: Missouri has lots of Rooms and Meals going to this. Next agenda items – diversification options.

CL: Will we know the new fee bill?

JA: It will be public in early January.

RS: Will we get Y/N from the Governor's office on any of our possible suggestions?

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10/30/06 5 PM – 7 PM 4th Floor Conference Room, Pavilion Building, Montpelier

Part 1 – Subcommittee Assignments

Attendees:

Committee Members:

Jim Shallow
James Ehlers
Richard Greenough
Rick Schoonover
Elizabeth Courtney
Craig Lantagne

Non-Members:

Steve Wright
Tom Decker
Sher Yacono
Jamey Fidel
George Gay
Tim Davis
Jason Aronowitz

Missing:

Evan Hughes
Terry Wilson
Paul Karczmarczyk

Funding Sources for Investigation by Subcommittees

- 1) Reimbursement for environmental work
- 2) Developer fees
- 3) Property transfer tax
- 4) General Fund
- 5) F&W Lottery
- 6) % Sales Tax redirected or increased
- 7) Rooms and Meals redirected
- 8) Gas tax – redirected
- 9) WMA Pass, Conservation permit, parking, hiking
- 10) Special Seasons - Example Archery Moose Stamps; also multi-year licenses
- 11) Boat Access permits
- 12) Increase existing license fees
- 13) Hazardous material tax
- 14) local options tax
- 14) Agency assist fees- reimbursement

Subcommittees

- 1) Chair JS
Members EH, TW
Sources 6,7,8,13,14
- 2) Chair CL
Members RG, RS
Sources 5,9,10,11,12
- 3) Chair PK
Members JE, EC
Sources 1,2,3,4,15

Part II – Remainder of Minutes

JE: Introductory remarks. Review of requested info due next week.

2000 Survey – Revenue Sources ranked Most to Least Acceptable:

Rooms and Meals Tax

General Fund

Sales Tax

Local Excise Tax

Developer Fees

Boat Access Fees

Raise Fishing License

Conservation Permit

Increase Sales Tax for “Expansion”

Increase Hunting License Fee

1990 List

Vehicle Use Policy
Hunter education
Marketing Plan
WMA Tax
License fees
Permit fees (Breedeers)
Application Fees
Derby permits
Property Transfer Tax
F&W Lottery
State Excise
Salmon tax

Agenda

Discussion
 Funding Sources
 2000
 1990
 States Overview
Subcommittee Report
Next Meeting
Public Comments

JE: Can we get minutes prepared before the meeting so we can approve them?

JA: Depends on workload, but will try. Note: my 1/8 of 1% answer by email was wrong- I will correct it.

EC: Move to approve minutes PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

JE: Let's make a list of the funding mechanisms, split into 3 subcommittees to look into them. We will select 9 funding mechanisms tonight.

Funding Sources for Investigation by Subcommittees

- 1) Reimbursement for environmental work
- 2) Developer fees
- 3) Property transfer tax
- 4) General Fund
- 5) F&W Lottery
- 6) % Sales Tax redirected or increased
- 7) Rooms and Meals redirected
- 8) Gas tax – redirected
- 9) WMA Pass, Conservation permit, parking, hiking
- 10) Special Seasons - Example Archery Moose Stamps; also multi-year licenses
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CL: Duck hunting fee seems low compared to the cost of heavy shot.

JE: People make emotional decisions – may go somewhere else for a \$10 increase in a license.

Steve Wright: What is society trying to tell us about supporting F&W – that we won't support F&W the traditional way.

Jamey Fidel: I could help a subcommittee on, say, developer fees, impact fees, how they could work.

JE: CL, will you chair a committee? PK, since he's not here, can chair one. MORE SUBCOMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS...

JE- Motion to create 3 subcommittees (as listed above).

EC: Second. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

EC: Can we define the scope of the assignment?

JE: Subcommittees will:

- review history of the funding mechanism in state and out of state

- list the pros and cons

- prepare a broad statement of political feasibility

- How much can it raise – high, low and recommended.

TD: 1,2,9,11,15 we can estimate for you.

JE/EC: JA, could you get the committee assignments out this week?

JA: Yes.

JE: Subcommittee report? (On public meeting)

EC: Nothing yet. But we will be meeting.

JE: Next meeting – Every 2nd and 4th Monday

11/13 5-7 PM, 11/27 5-7 PM, 12/11 5-7 PM.

Motion next meeting 11/13 5-7 PM. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

JE: Public comments?

G.G. Dept. of Taxes Biannual Report. Is 2005/2006 out yet? We could use copies.

SW: Do we have a strategy for when it gets to the Legislature? Need to start talking to people.

JE: Must follow up and lobby throughout the session.

JS: Put this on the agenda for next time.

EC: Subcommittees will recommend strategies.

JE: At the first meeting, we all committed to lobby all through the session and support the recommendations. (Note: I glossed over this important point in the first set of minutes under "introductory remarks.")

SW: That was not done in 1990 –we've learned something. The non-profit community will help.

EC: Motion to adjourn.

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Rick Schoonover
Elizabeth Courtney
Craig Lantagne
Paul Karczmarczyk
Evan Hughes

Non-Members:

Jon Kurt
Steve Wright
Sher Yacono
Jamey Fidel
Roy Marble
George Gay
Jason Aronowitz

Question from EC: Property transfer tax to Housing and Conservation? -Actual \$. Law says 50%.

Agenda

5:10 F&W Presentation
5:40 Subcommittee work
6:30 Subcommittee reports
Public Input Sub
Funding Subs
Public Inputs and Questions
Adjourn

SY: Presentation of Funding Need memo

JE: (Trying to clarify \$15 M budget – 131 positions, 122 filled positions?)

JE: Need to find the funding. Whether all the needs are real is not for us to determine. That will be in testimony to the Legislature.

SY: (Notes on budget) Fed \$ 706K – We don't have the staff to spend. The \$1,486K will go down now that we have hires three people.

JE: Funding needs are about \$3M to 8M. The \$3M includes the current \$2.2M GF and adds 400 to 800K to fill all authorized positions – we are backing out the vacancy savings (approximately 400-800K).

JS: Show the potential for matching Fed \$ when we go to the Legislature.

SY: Assumed \$5M gross, \$2M State and \$3M Federal.

EH: The match will change every year. The thing to do is to designate a revenue stream; ex: a % of rooms and meals.

JE: There are people who would like to have F&W justiy their need every year.

EH: Could say x% of the deficit be funded from a specified source. Whatever \$ necessary comes out of the specified sources.

JE: Outside people are looking at moving wardens to Public Safety because they are subsidized by licenses for non-wildlife work.

JE: Requests for information from any of the subs?

JS: We're looking at taxes, redirecting, not increases.

- Sales

- Gas

- Rooms and Meals

- Need to not disincenent license sales.

CL: VT Police Lt. Dan ____ will come in and talk re stickers for non-motorized vessels - 185,000 (verify?)

- Lottery – one game dedicated to F&W.

- Licensing – 5 year hunting license to avoid churn; figures coming.

- Archery moose permit – not enough \$ in it.

PK: Environmental work reimbursement

- Fed reimbursement for volunteers

- Outside mitigation work

- Developer fees. Nevada has mitigation for specific sites and species.

- GF shift for Public Safety for wardens' non-F&W work.

SY: Some non-F&W work is coded, others are in narrative.

PK: Could use warden % F&W /Non-F&W. Also outside agency work for reimbursement such as Act 250.

JE: I will summarize: think about arguments against the proposals so far.

Public Comments

GG: Tax Committee should explore the stability of depts.. receipt of gas tax funds. May be as good as GF. Think of revenue needs 10 years from now.

Next meeting 11/27/06.

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Evan Hughes
Terry Wilson

Non-Members:

Tom Decker
Sher Yacono
Jamey Fidel
Jason Aronowitz

JE: Motion to accept minutes? PASSED

JE: Next meeting will be to refine proposals, hear from any outside experts. Next meeting is 12/11. No meeting on 12/25, so it will be our last pre-public meeting.

JS: Set up a meeting for early January.

EC: Places for public meeting. VTC – no open evenings; Gifford Hospital is a possibility.

JE: Motion for next meeting 12/11? PASSED

Split into Subcommittees

JE: Let's start with the Public Input Sub.

EC: Looking for a meeting place in Randolph (central). Gifford Hospital is a possibility.

JE: How about the auditorium in Pavilion? Or Rm. 10 in the Statehouse?

Action Item for JA: Check Pavilion Auditorium availability.

JE: Try 1/4 with 1/8 as a backup. Meeting on 12/11 – sub reports due on the 14th to the co-chairs. The co-chairs will have the reports to EC by the 19th.

JE: Where can we put the draft of the report for public review?

JE: I am comfortable with the reaching out to the public we have already done. The web site posting is an added nicety.

JE (to Tom Decker) We will need the 1990 and 2000 studies available.

TD: I can make them available as PDF.

JS: I'll provide a link to the Conservation study.

JE: We need a press release.

EC: Next meeting we will have a draft press release.

JS: (has sub of Taxes)

- Sales Tax

- Meals and Rooms

- Hazardous Waste – low priority

- Local Option Taxes – Low priority

- Gas Tax – too variable

-Redirect, not increase

-Tie the amount either to the amount needed for F&W, or needed for match.

-Tie both M&R and Sales Tax together based on their relative proportion (now about 2:1) sales to R&M, and link the money to performance. Should depend on license sales – TBD.

RG: Direct to the department, not as a transfer?

JS: That would be our recommendation.

RS: (as temp chair of user fees)

- Archery moose – too little \$

- Multi-year licenses

 - Avoid churn

 - Est. \$300K per year lost to churn

 - Requires Leg. Approval.

 - Highly recommend this one.

Similar for hunting but the data is not as good; probably \$100K +, could also stabilize hunter numbers (speculative).

- License sales agents could lose some \$

- Trappers – small \$ but better convenience.

Lottery – ¾ of sales are now in scratch tickets. Potential \$300K to \$400K.

Infrastructure already in place.

Requires Leg. Approval to not go to the Ed fund. (Use for F&W related education?)

- Licensing of non-motorized vessels

 - Potential \$1-2M/Yr at \$10

 - Other benefits

 - Law enforcement wants it for search and rescue, recovery of stolen property

 - Broad base of support

 - Could be dedicated to access areas

 - Leg. Approval required

 - DMV has infrastructure

 - Cost to implement coming

 - Q- Non-fishing motorized vessels?

PK:

Property Transfer Tax –unpopular

Developer fees – still considering but complicated

Reimbursements – to complicated to implement in detail; just use GF

Law Enforcement – Now \$4.2M for 30 people. Alaska went to State Troopers for wardens.

Move wardens to Public Safety

JE: Change in plan? Have sub reports ready by next meeting and critique for two hours next meeting. Can sub chairs have their draft reports ready by then and final reports 3 days later?

EC/PK: Have them two days earlier so we can read them first. (via email)

RS: Outline form?

JE Motion: Email draft reports by end-of-business on the 10th? PASSED

ADJOURNED

Fish and Wildlife Funding Task Force Meeting Minutes

12/11/06 5 PM – 7 PM 4th Floor Conference Room, Pavilion Building, Montpelier

Attendees:

Committee Members:

Jim Shallow
Richard Greenough
Rick Schoonover
Elizabeth Courtney
Paul Karczmarczyk
Evan Hughes
Terry Wilson

Non-Members:

Tom Decker
Sher Yacono
Jamey Fidel
George Gay
Rosalind Renfrew
Jason Aronowitz

Missing:

James Ehlers

JS: My subcommittee is recommending redirection of some sales tax, similar to what is done in Virginia. For Vermont, the tax revenue as a result of Fish and Wildlife related trips and equipment sales is about \$15M.

RS: As far as funding, it would be easy from hunters and anglers, hard in competition with, for example, education.

RG: Our capital needs are enormous. Ask for it all.

JS: Can we come back to the boat ramp issue later – not from Meals and Rooms or sales tax. We can make an argument that \$15M in Sales and Room and Meals comes from Fish and Wildlife activities.

(Discussion of trying for a percentage of Sales tax or an amount based on F&W related sales from Census data.)

JS: Summary: We have agreement that some Sales and Rooms and Meals tax should be dedicated to the department. Options are 1) Fixed percentage 2) based on census 3) determine “needs” and fill the difference from Sales and Rooms and Meals.

(Note: JA left the room to make various copies as requested by the committee.)

CL presented on multi-year licenses, moose archery (not enough \$ in it), a F&W lottery, and Registration of non-motorized vessels.

TD: \$300K sounds like a good estimate for multi-year fishing licenses.

RG: Non-motorized vessels –

Maine has a \$20 milfoil sticker. Motorized vessel registrations keep going up.

TW: Enforcement is an issue.

EC: What is done in other states?

RG: In Maine, you have to have a milfoil sticker for motorized and non-motorized vessels. We have something like 5000 navigable miles and 278 lakes and ponds. Possible dedicate some portion of what is collected to building non-motorized accesses and market them to boost revenues. We should work with other departments. AOT has pull-offs that could be turned into accesses. This could be planned as a business venture for the state.

TD: Dingell/Johnson money prioritizes Fishing > Motorized > Non-motorized.

EH: What about enforcement? What are they doing in Maine?

RG: For Vermont, I recommend a hand-out sheet explaining the benefits – for enforcement, search and rescue, and dedicated funds.

RS: We are getting into things the Legislative committees can figure out.

TD: A portion of the \$ would go to public safety? That is why they are in favor of non-motorized vessel registrations?

RG: No. They want it to save money, possibly up to \$500K in a year, it varies a lot, it can cost \$50K if they bring in a chopper once. And having the registration information could save a life. (By not tying up resources on an unneeded search and rescue, or knowing where a found vessel came from.)

EC: Work reimbursement. Developer fees. General Fund (GF) – yes, \$4.2M to support the wardens. Keep wardens in F&W, do not move them to Public Safety. Wardens provide a wide variety of functions now and should be GF-supported.

EH: If Public Safety pays for the wardens they will get some control.

JS: Is there money to be matched in Public Safety?

TD: A number of small contracts pay for some warden activity.

JS: This money should come from GF because of the general benefit of warden activity.

EC: Developer fees – no – use GF to cover time used.

JS: Are we comfortable with more GF?

RS: We need to include a list of GF functions performed by F&W and how much it costs.

JS: I'd like to summarize where we have agreement, what we need to discuss, and public thoughts.

Summary:

\$4.2M for Law Enforcement currently, with 3 vacancies held empty. Now all license \$. We agree on:

- Sales and Rooms and Meals taxes should be redirected. The amount should be from ? to \$15M. Open is whether it should be a percentage, based on census, or on needs.
- 5Year licenses for trapping, fishing. Look at hunting later. Estimated revenue is \$300K to \$400K.
- Lottery tickets – estimated at \$300K.

- Registrations of non-motorized vessels; dedicate some of the \$ to accesses.
- GF \$ - there is a strong argument for GF for Law Enforcement.

Rosalind Renfrew: Suggestion – opportunities for volunteer stamps and stickers, voluntary offered at point of purchase. This would save on enforcement (for non-motorized stickers).

EH: There are voluntary federal “junior duck stamps” the \$ go to federal conservation programs.

GG: The Vermont Wildlife Partnership met 2 times to try for dedicated funds for Fish and Wildlife. They will support this task force. They have some guiding principals: “Every VTer and visitor to the state is a beneficiary of the dept’s work”, and “Keep it simple.” They recommend focusing on one funding mechanism, “reapportionment of 1/8 of 1% of all activities in the Sales and Use tax.”

Discussion of email. Draft report, conference call.

EC: Suggest that we poll by putting ideas in priority order.

ADJOURNED