



**VERMONT BOARD OF LIBRARIES  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
October 13, 2015  
10:00 a.m. – noon  
Midstate Library Service Center  
Berlin, VT**

**Members present:** Bruce Post, Chair; Josh Fitzhugh; Jim Gish; Lucy Comstock-Gay; Deb Granquist; Maxie Ewins; Martha Reid.

**Others present:** Margaret Woodruff, Vermont Library Association; Tom McMurdo, Department of Libraries; and members of the public: Michael Cerulli Billingsley (Plainfield), Jeanne A. Brink (Barre), David Strong (Plainfield Select Board), reporter and photographer from the Times Argus.

**Call to Order:** Post called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

**Additions/Changes to Agenda:** None.

**Approval of Minutes:** The July 14, 2015 minutes were approved unanimously, without change.

Chair Post expressed appreciation from the Board for the work of Brittney Wilson, Executive Assistant to the State Librarian, who recently left the Department of Libraries to take a new job.

**Geographic Naming Public Hearing: Mskaskek Brook**

Chair Bruce Post opened the public hearing by reading a passage from the book *Wisdom Sits in Places; Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* by Keith Basso, which illustrates the importance of understanding story behind the names of natural features which reference Native American language and history.

The Town of Plainfield submitted a petition for naming the unnamed brook, located in the Town of Plainfield, and originating at Spruce Mountain and running approximately five miles across Bean and East Hill Roads and into Great Brook. Board members each had a packet of materials including copies of the petition, several maps, and correspondence between the Town and the State Librarian. All paperwork and documentation were complete and three members of the public spoke in favor of naming the brook as Mskaskek, an Abenaki word meaning “red spruce”:

- Michael Cerulli Billingsley presented a large map of the area where the brook is located and described the remote area where the brook runs, and related his

experience hiking along the brook and taking GPS readings along its run. The brook is not on public land and citizens who own land along the brook have no objections to the proposed name.

- Jeanne A. Brink, an expert on the Abenaki language, explained the grammar, spelling, and pronunciation of the word “mskaskek” and explained why this “locative” form of the word is correct as a name for the brook. She also told the Board that a group of contemporary speakers of the Abenaki language met and agreed on the spelling of the word for this naming.
- David Strong, Select Board member from the Town of Plainfield, reviewed the process that the Town used for seeking approval from town citizens regarding the decision to name the brook and the choice of the proposed name, and cited the letter that was sent to the State indicating broad local public support.

**Action Item:** Fitzhugh moved to close the hearing and Comstock-Gay seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. Board discussion followed. Granquist and Fitzhugh spoke in favor of the name, citing the thorough research connecting the name with the local area and Abenaki language and the good communication and cooperation between the State and the Town of Plainfield.

Granquist moved, Gish seconded the motion: “to approve the name of “Mskaskek Brook” for the brook which runs approximately 5 miles through the Town of Plainfield , extending from the headwaters on Spruce Mountain and ending at Great Brook, noting that the name complies with the geographic naming obligation under State statute.”

After further discussion, the motion was amended to include “... the brook and its south tributary, but not the north tributary, which runs ....” The motion passed unanimously.\*

Signage for Mskaskek Brook is a local matter and the Town of Plainfield may, if it so chooses, place sign(s) with the name of the brook. Reid will issue an Order of the naming decision and will contact the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.

*\*[Note: The State Librarian received notice after this meeting from the Town of Plainfield that there will be an official naming ceremony that will include Abenaki elders on Saturday, November 7, 2015 at 1:00 p.m.]*

**State Librarians Report:**

- No questions regarding the written report from the State Librarian
- Final report from Himmel & Wilson Library Consultants is pending a decision from the State on the results of the FY2016 retirement incentive. Three Department employees have been approved for the incentive and will retire this FY. Information on whether or not these positions can be refilled will be available by the end of October.

- The Draft Himmel & Wilson report recommends changes at the State Library that would have the Department move away from “walk-in” service and physical collections. Discussion followed related to the functions of the Department and determining what is most important in a time of diminished staff and resources.
- When asked what she considers to be the most important functions of the Department, VLA Vice-President Margaret Woodruff (Director of the Charlotte Library) reported:
  - Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped: Large Print Books
  - Interlibrary Loan support
  - Professional Development opportunities / Certification program
  - Consulting services
- The Board recommended to the State Librarian:
  - Be realistic, and leave behind what is no longer practical
  - Emphasize what the Department does well and what is most needed and valued by local libraries and citizens
  - Be pro-active about “marketing” the value of the Department’s work
  - Keep at the heart of the Department the aspirational nature of what libraries are and do in terms of intellectual and social capital, lifelong learning, local economic development, and community connection. Comstock –Gay cited the recent work on “Building Vermont’s Moral Economy” (Public Assets Institute).

#### **Green Mountain Digital Archive**

Tom McMurdo, Collections & Digital Initiatives Librarian, made a short presentation of the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) and the work of the Green Mountain Digital Archive group which includes representatives from the Department of Libraries, UVM, Middlebury College, Saint Michael’s College, Vermont Folklife Center, Vermont Historical Society, Norwich University, and Vermont Archives and Records Administration to build a digital archive which will be uploaded in late 2016 to the DPLA.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

#### **Next meeting:**

Tuesday, January 12, 10:00 a.m. – noon  
Location and snow date: TBD

Respectfully submitted,



Martha Reid,  
State Librarian and Secretary, Board of Libraries