

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMISSION ESTABLISHED TO INVESTIGATE RELATIVE TO HIGHWAYS, PARKS, RESERVATIONS AND NAVIGATION ALONG AND ON THE CONNECTICUT RIVER.

[Conservation.]

NOVEMBER 30, 1931.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives.

The special unpaid commission, known as the Connecticut Valley Regional Planning Commission, respectfully submits a preliminary report.

The Commission was created by chapter 50, Resolves of 1931, which reads as follows:

RESOLVE PROVIDING FOR AN INVESTIGATION BY A SPECIAL COMMISSION RELATIVE TO THE HIGHWAYS, PARKS AND RESERVATIONS ALONG THE CONNECTICUT RIVER AND RELATIVE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF SAID RIVER FOR NAVIGATION PURPOSES.

Resolved, That a special unpaid commission, to be known as the Connecticut Valley Regional Planning Commission, and to consist of one senator to be designated by the president of the senate, three representatives to be designated by the speaker of the house of representatives, and three persons to be appointed by the governor, is hereby established to investigate as to the most appropriate and feasible manner of co-ordinating the present highways, parks and state reservations along the Connecticut river, and their unification into an accessible system with a view to promoting their most beneficial use and enjoyment, and to investigate the matter of the improvement of said Connecticut river for the purposes of navigation, and said commission shall include in its report, hereinafter provided

for, all facts concerning the present condition and uses of said river, what investigations, reports, appropriations and expenditures have been made by the United States and by the commonwealth relative to the navigation of said river and the protection of its banks, and what action, if any, should be taken by the commonwealth and the various municipalities bordering on said river or contiguous thereto, either in co-operation with the United States, the state of Connecticut, and the various corporations owning or controlling water rights or privileges on said river, or without such co-operation, to carry into effect such projects as may be recommended for increasing the present facilities of said river for navigation. In connection with said investigations, said commission shall consider the report submitted to the general court in the year nineteen hundred and twenty-four by the Connecticut Valley Park Commission, appointed under chapter sixty-nine of the resolves of nineteen hundred and twenty-three, and all the plans and data compiled by said commission, and shall also consider the report submitted to the general court in the year nineteen hundred and thirteen by the Connecticut Valley Waterway Board, appointed under chapter one hundred and forty-nine of the resolves of nineteen hundred and twelve. Said commission may expend, with the approval of the governor and council, for clerical assistance, travel and other expenses, such sums, not exceeding one thousand dollars, as may hereafter be appropriated. It shall report to the general court the results of its investigations, and its recommendations, if any, together with plans and estimates and drafts of legislation necessary to carry such recommendations into effect, by filing the same with the clerk of the house of representatives on or before the first Wednesday of December in the current year. [*Approved June 9, 1931.*]

PERSONNEL OF THE COMMISSION.

President Bacon of the Senate designated the Honorable Chester W. Allen of Springfield. Speaker Saltonstall of the House of Representatives designated Representative William E. Kirkpatrick of Holyoke, Representative Emma E. Brigham of Springfield, and Representative John P. Gaffney of Springfield. His Excellency the Governor designated John B. Callaghan of Springfield, Chauncey A. Steiger of Holyoke, and Dr. John F. Kennedy of Chicopee.

REPORT.

The Commission held its first meeting in the Hampden County Court House, Springfield, on the afternoon of July 15, 1931, and elected Senator Chester W. Allen as

chairman; Representative William E. Kirkpatrick, vice-chairman; and Donald F. MacPhee, secretary.

The Commission, considering itself in part a continuation of a similar commission created in 1923, and bound by the stipulation contained in chapter 50, Resolves of 1931, to "consider the report submitted to the general court in 1924 by the Connecticut Valley Park Commission, appointed under chapter sixty-nine of the resolves of nineteen hundred and twenty-three," felt that its first duty was, in so far as possible, to bring that report up to date. The secretary was instructed at the first meeting, July 15, 1931, to do this forthwith.

Examination of the report of the Connecticut Valley Park Commission, which was compiled by former Senator Francis X. Quigley of Holyoke, and submitted to the General Court of 1924, disclosed that this commission had made a comprehensive survey of conditions relative to the seventeen cities and towns contiguous to the Connecticut River, and was complete as of that date.

The 1923 commission had reached the conclusion that the necessary step to be taken was the formation of a regional planning commission for the Connecticut Valley region, and so recommended to the General Court of 1924. No positive action was taken on this recommendation by the General Court of that year nor subsequently until the creation in 1931 of the Connecticut Valley Regional Planning Commission to resume and enlarge upon the work begun in 1923.

The commission of 1923 included in its report a series of tables concerning growth and distribution of population, manufactures, polls and taxation. These tables were brought up to date as far as possible within the limits of official statistics from various State departments.

With this statistical information revised and the report of the 1923 commission as a background for its work, the Commission of 1931 felt it incumbent upon itself to make a personal survey of present conditions in the territory assigned for its study. Accordingly, it was voted to take a two-day trip through the seventeen cities and

towns concerned in order to obtain information at first hand as to the planning needs of the valley region.

At a second meeting of the Commission in Springfield, on August 19, 1931, it was voted to make the two-day survey trip on September 16 and 17, 1931. At the August 19 meeting the second of the Commission's two problems — namely, the future development of navigation in the Connecticut River — was discussed. It was agreed that consideration of this problem should be postponed and the Commission's attention, for the time being, be centered on the matter of regional planning.

On the inspection trip of the valley region, taken September 16 and 17, all of the seventeen cities and towns contiguous to the Connecticut River were visited. In addition to giving the Commission a first-hand understanding of conditions, the trip was productive of a unanimous opinion on the part of the Commission that the problem of regional planning in the Connecticut River Valley was not one that could properly be confined to the seventeen cities and towns contiguous to the river, but must embrace the entire watershed of the Connecticut River; or, stated another way, the three western counties of Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin.

At a well-attended public hearing in the Holyoke City Hall, on October 16, 1931, the thought of the Commission that the primary need at this time is continuance of the Commission's life and enlargement of its scope to take in the watershed of the Connecticut River was advanced voluntarily by several of the speakers who have been intimately associated with planning work in the valley in recent years.

The Commission has carefully considered this matter and desires to hold further public hearings in Springfield and Greenfield to ascertain if its continuance with an enlarged scope is a general wish of interested parties in the Connecticut Valley.

From the start the Commission has found that it was faced with a problem that exceeded the limits of the resolve creating it. As yet the second duty delegated to the Commission — that of investigating Connecticut

River navigation — has not been found possible of accomplishment. These matters, from the immense amount of public interest they have aroused in the territory concerned, are, the Commission feels, properly to be adjudged of great importance to western Massachusetts.

At this time it is impossible for your Commission to determine accurately how long it will need to properly complete its important duties. It feels that the subjects involved deserve painstaking, unhurried consideration. It does not believe the Legislature would wish to have the Commission do other than a thorough piece of work.

Accordingly, the Commission respectfully requests that it might be permitted to continue its activities for the time being. If this is granted, it is the purpose of the Commission to file a further report with your honorable bodies early in 1932, to outline at that time recommendations on which mature consideration has been given, and then to ask the Legislature for such further consideration of extension of time and enlargement of scope to complete its work as may, on that date, appear advisable.

Therefore, the Commission does now respectfully request the Legislature to adopt an order authorizing the Commission to proceed with its work and to report early in the 1932 session.

Respectfully submitted,

CHESTER W. ALLEN, *Chairman.*

JOHN F. KENNEDY.

CHAUNCEY A. STEIGER.

EMMA E. BRIGHAM.

JOHN B. CALLAGHAN.

WILLIAM E. KIRKPATRICK.

JOHN P. GAFFNEY.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

ORDER.

Ordered, That the special commission known as the Connecticut Valley Regional Planning Board, established under Chapter 50 of the Resolves of 1931, be granted until the first Wednesday of March in the current year within which to report the results of their investigation as to the most appropriate and feasible manner of coordinating the present highways, parks and state reservations along the Connecticut River and as to the improvement of said river for purposes of navigation.



