

## EXETER RIVER STUDY COMMITTEE MINUTES

January 21, 2010

### 1. Convene Meeting:

Chairman Lionel Ingram, Paul Vlasich-Town Engineer, Resident Rod Bourdon, Pete Richardson, Ginny Raub, Matt Quandt, Roger Wakeman-PEA Rep., and Mimi Becker were all in attendance. Guest speakers: Deb Loiselle and Sally Soule from NH DES. Lionel convened the meeting at 9:05 a.m.

### 2. Approve minutes of 12/16/09:

There was a motion to accept the minutes of December 16, 2009 as presented by Matt Quandt and seconded by Pete Richardson. Vote was unanimous.

### 3. Introduction of the Heritage Commission – Chairman Lionel Ingram:

Lionel Ingram introduced John Merkle, Chairman of the Heritage Commission. John Merkle introduced himself stating the Heritage Commission has been asked to get involved once the 106 application goes into effect. He can be brought in to help go through the process if the dam were to be removed. The process is mandated by Federal regulations and will take a year or more and is designed to identify the historical elements that are in place and effected by the dam removal and cultural resources that are also affected by it. John stated in the event the decision is made to remove the dam there is a process of mitigation to make sure those resources are not damaged or lost. That is a role the Heritage Commission would like to get involved in and recommending what needs to be done.

Mimi Becker asked John if the historic damage that needs to be mitigated how would you mitigate that? John replied he is not sure what the mitigation would be, it all depends on what is discovered. Adding, it may be the mitigation involves just documentation.

Lionel asked John about the town wide border to border survey of the historical aspects of the Town. John stated the Heritage Commission has received a grant of \$12,000 through the Certified Local Government Program to begin the survey. Their plan is to complete a Town wide mapping survey of Exeter that ultimately will lead to the identification of all the historical and cultural resources within the Town. John stated once this is done it will help with any changes within the Town, to know if there are any aspects that will be impacted and if so be able to make recommendations to ensure they won't be compromised.

### 4. Report on the Status of Actions by the Selectmen – Matt Quandt:

Matt Quandt informed the committee that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) has agreed to put the request for \$40,000.00 on the ballot as a warrant article. The Selectmen have comprised the language for the warrant to ask for the full \$100,000 with \$60,000 (60%) to come back to the town through grants. Lionel Ingram stated the committee has asked the BOS to accept the fact the committee is going to start the process to “consider” dam removal. They acknowledged.

### 5. Status of DES Dam Bureau Letter of Requirements Regarding Dam Repair – Paul Vlasich:

Paul Vlasich updated the committee by stating the required Flood Response Plan has been completed by DPW. It was submitted to the State and the State replied with approval.

## **6. Discussion of the Process of Consideration of Dam Removal – DES:**

Deb Loiselle, NH DES introduced Sally Soule, NH DES, Watershed Assistant Section, stating that Sally manages a grant called the Watershed Restoration Grant which is federal money from Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) managed by DES. Deb stated that Sally thought this would be an appropriate project for those funds.

Sally Soule stated there are funds that can be put towards the Water Study Feasibility Study (WSFS) to determine the aspects of dam removal. Sally stated there is \$60,000 available from the fund that can be put towards it. Sally added it does require a non federal local match of \$40,000; it's a 60/40 program as all of their grants are. Sally stated they are very interested in exploring what dam removal would mean for the river based on the work that has been done through the Geomorphic Assessment Project. Sally stated her department would like to work with the committee, the Town, and ERLAC to further explore the possibility of dam removal. Sally stated the funding would be available now, EPA has signed off on the project. We would have to determine a sequence of funding and develop a scope of work for the project, contract it and get it through Governor & Council. Sally will be meeting in the coming week with Deb Loiselle and Ted Diers to go through what the various items would be for the study and figure out a way to sequence it and get things up and running by early spring. The earliest to get it through Governor & Council would be April or early May.

Deb Loiselle addressed the issue of getting reimbursed once the work is complete for the WSFS. What Deb would like to develop is a process where you identify small tasks and as soon as a consultant has completed the tasks the Town would submit the invoice to Sally Soule and she would reimburse the Town fairly immediately.

Lionel Ingram stated one of the major costs, identified by Deb Loiselle, is somewhere about \$40,000 for historical analysis. Lionel asked Sally if it would be covered in the scope of work that she described. Sally Soule replied, yes, it is likely it would be covered. Lionel asked if the costs exceeded \$100,000 would there be additional help covering these costs. Deb replied yes. Deb stated she and Paul Vlasich have gone through the tasks list<sup>i</sup> and identified "commonality tasks", these are tasks that need to be done whether you remove or repair the dam. Deb stated that \$24,500 worth of work needs to be done irregardless. The committee would look at the earmarked funds that have been set aside for modifications and put it towards that work.

Deb Loiselle informed the committee there are two other potential sources of funding and are open to solicitation. 1) The Gulf of Maine Council; it's a partnership of NOAA. Deb stated although the deadline has passed on the letter of intent it is not mandatory. Deb inquired if we could still put in an application for some dollars for this project under this solicitation and she was told yes. The application would be due March 1, 2010; 2) The Estuary Restoration Act (ERA) which is federal dollars and that application would be due in April 2010. The process would require you to ask for cash and come up with cash or in-kind services to match those dollars.

Mimi Becker informed Deb Loiselle that there is going to be another RFP put out relatively shortly that would require a partnership with Great Bay Estuary and it would be for research that would serve local communities. Mimi suggested to Deb Loiselle she may want to let Great Bay know that there may be an interest in addressing an estuary related issue and when they get the RFP that she may want to talk about it. Deb thanked Mimi and made a note of it.

Discussion took place on the next step towards the Dam Removal Feasibility Study tasks list. It was agreed by the committee that a subcommittee<sup>ii</sup> be formed, co-chaired by Mimi Becker and Deb Loiselle. It was agreed the committee be made up of following members and start with the following tasks:

- The subcommittee should be made up of:
  - 2 River Study members (Mimi Becker and Roger Wakeman-PEA)
  - Paul Vlasich-Town Engineer
  - 3 representatives from DES (Ted Diers, Sally Soule, Deb Loiselle)
  - 1-2 from the Heritage Committee
  - 1 from EPA
  - 1 from NOAA
  - Other interested funding partners?
- Set a public education plan
- Start thinking about the RFP
- Deal with folks at the State on the historical level
- When to start the public awareness
- Create a flow chart to clarify the flow of events

Lionel Ingram informed the committee he has spoken with someone at the Division of Historical Resources (DHR) and they stated we needed to send them a letter requesting help from them and start the process in that direction. Deb stated for dam removal projects the two members that are her “go to” people are Edna and Nadine at DHR and they will disseminate the information internally. Deb feels they will ask for a Request for Project Review (RPR) form. It is a two page form that can upload the data from the Town and John Merkle’s help to fill the form out will be huge. Once the form is submitted to DHR they will review it and let the Town know if there’s enough information to make a determination or not.

Lionel asked Deb Loiselle if we would need two consulting with one being an historical consultant. Deb stated it could be just one; there are some larger consultant firms that have architectural and archeological historians within their firm. Typically you hire a lead consultant; in the RFP you have to do these various tasks. Paul Vlasich asked Deb if she could get him a copy of an existing RFP. Deb replied yes. Paul asked for clarification on when the RFP would be done; Lionel responded after the Town vote.

Mimi Becker stated going forward it would be important to make an organizational model that would address the questions that have been raised making it not only clear on the communication line but also the accountability lines which are a major issue and a normal concern of a lot of the public.

Roger Wakeman asked Deb if the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process was included in the \$100,000. Deb replied, no. Deb added for dam removals thus far they have not prepared a titled environmental document.

## **7. Letter from the Mill:**

Lionel Ingram informed the committee he had received a letter, as Chairman of the River Study Committee, from the Mill concerned about the decision the Town had made to lower the river. The Mill’s lawyer wrote the letter concerned that the Town was taking action contrary to interest of the Mill. Lionel stated he did not respond to the letter, Russ Dean informed him the Town would respond. Lionel stated he would contact the Mill as the Chairman and ask them for a representative to join the committee.

**8. Other Business:**

Paul Vlasich informed the committee that Weston & Sampson, the consultants who prepared the Water Feasibility Study<sup>iii</sup>, has prepared a draft Executive Summary and are looking for the committee's final comments by the end of January 2010. The final report will be available in February 2010. Paul added that an Executive Summary was not included in the original draft.

**9. Public Comment:**

None

**10. Adjourn the Meeting:**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m. The next meeting was set for Feb. 18, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. in the Nowak Room of the Town Office.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Rogers  
Public Works Office Manager

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<sup>i</sup> The blue highlighted spreadsheet passed out at a previous meeting by Deb Loiselle.

<sup>ii</sup> The first subcommittee meeting was held in the Wheelwright Room at the Town Office February 3, 2010.

<sup>iii</sup> The Water Feasibility Study PowerPoint presentation is available on the Town's website: [www.town.exeter.nh.us](http://www.town.exeter.nh.us)