

EXETER RIVER STUDY COMMITTEE MINUTES

October 21, 2010

1. Convene Meeting:

Chairman Lionel Ingram, Resident Rod Bourdon, Don Clement– Selectmen Rep, Roger Wakeman – PEA, Frank Patterson, Kristen Murphy – Natural Resource Planner and Pete Richardson were all in attendance. Guest speakers were Jennifer Perry – Director of Public Works and Brian Comeau – Fire Chief. Lionel convened the meeting at 9:05 a.m.

2. Approve minutes of 9/23/10:

There was a motion to accept the minutes of September 23, 2010. Roger Wakeman would like to have included in the September minutes his request to have a discussion with DPW on the policy and procedure of lower the dam. A motion was made to accept the September minutes as amended by Frank Patterson and seconded by Rod Bourdon. Vote was unanimous.

3. Status of the RFP for the Feasibility Study – Paul Vlasich or Russ Dean:

In Paul Vlasich absence Roger Wakeman updated the committee. Roger started by stating the subcommittee had met and incorporated the comments on the RFP, they did one final scrub of it to make sure they had everything and prepared it for issuance. Roger stated the RFP is on the Towns website with a due date of November 22, 2010 for the consultants who want to propose on it. It is anticipated the proposals will be open on November 22, 2010 at the Selectmen's meeting. It was put in the RFP the anticipated decision date of awarding to a consultant in January 2011. Roger stated there is a site visit on October 28, 2010 for prospective consultants to attend at the Town Hall at 10:00 a.m. Roger gave kudos to Mimi Becker and Deb Loiselle who took the lead on making sure everything was included and finalized the document by incorporating all the comments.

Lionel Ingram stated he feels the RFP has been broadly distributed. He also feels comfortable not only with the RFP but would like to give thanks to everyone on the subcommittee for all their hard work.

4. Discussion of How to Proceed After the RFP is Published – Mimi Becker:

Lionel stated that as a request of the state and Mimi Becker he has asked that Eric Hutchins, NOAA be included as a member of the Selection Committee. Lionel asked that this agenda item be tabled until the next meeting due to Mimi Becker's absence. The committee agreed.

5. DPW Activities Related to the Exeter and Squamscott Rivers – Jennifer Perry:

Roger Wakeman wanted to make one comment before Jennifer Perry started. Roger wanted to note that after last meeting he had the opportunity to speak with Jennifer but wanted to make sure the reason and the genesis of his request was understood. It was to make sure as a committee; recognizing sort of the committee's informational and advisory role as compared to the operational role of the Towns departments, that the committee would just be collaborating and sharing. The issue he had brought up was just sharing information of the process and what had come up recently in the decision to lower the dam around some of the anticipated storm events as in informational sense not an accusatory sense of issue of process. Roger just wanted to understand as a committee some responsibility for the big issues and to understand it. That was the genesis of his request.

Jennifer Perry and Brian Comeau spoke in reference to the policy and procedure of lowering the dam in anticipation of storm events. Jennifer began by informing the committee of Public Works "Dam Operation and Maintenance Manual" that is used for operational guidelines that Public Works does follow. Jennifer stated DPW worked very closely with NHDES and NH Fish and Game in developing these procedures back about 4-5 years ago and to come up with a protocol in modifying the sluice gates that protected not only fisheries but to the extent

possible minimize flooding impact on the river. Jennifer stated one action that does need to take place when we have a major storm event is the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) does take over and Brian Comeau is the Commander in Chief of the EOC. In the case of major events DPW works very closely with Brian Comeau. Jennifer offered to provide the committee with a copy of the procedure. Don Clement stated they are on the Town's website. Jennifer stated that keeping the right amount of inches over the crest and during three seasons is very challenging.

Lionel Ingram wanted to commend DPW for having the protocol in place because ten years ago when the River Study Committee began it did not and that was one of the major concerns on how things were handled. DPW having the protocol in place is a major step forward. Lionel stated that in the past 4-5 years DPW has stepped up to the plate on managing the river and has done quite well and that is greatly appreciated. Rod Bourdon also gave kudos to DPW. Lionel asked Brian Comeau for his thoughts if the dam does get removed. Brian stated currently the town relies on the river so heavily and if they were to get off any municipal water system he is looking at alternative sites that would replace the hydrant on Pleasant Street as well as the two under the Library and the sluiceway; those hydrants are relied on for the downtown area. Brian stated a possibility that is also being looked at is doing something below the river by PEA boathouse by putting in a couple of dry hydrants in that area and use the tidal water. Also, another area is on Franklin Street to extend some dry hydrants there. Brian is keeping his eye on projects that come along in those areas in order to incorporate hydrants into the project to keep the cost down.

Roger Wakeman asked about the issue and what happened in August in terms of going forward and also was there any lessons learned from the August event of lowering the dam. Roger agrees with Rod and applauds the effort; it was a good pro active measure. Roger asked what can be expected in the fall and anticipating events.

Brian Comeau responded stating as he monitored all the storms forecasting was pushing the storm closer to the east coast and with the predictions if we had gotten what they said it would have caused flooding in the Exeter area. Brian stated one thing that was not planned nor had never seen before was the fact the river dropped so quickly. It showed the draught conditions in the area right now. Normally you could open the gate and run it for 30 days nonstop and barely drop the river but when they opened the gate up by the next morning all the reserve were gone to the lowest he's ever seen. Brian said in the future once the gate is open DPW will have someone posted there to maintain the water level around the clock. Lionel asked Roger if there is a need to inform PEA and the Mill when the lowering takes place. Roger replied he has already spoken with Jennifer and they have worked out a communication protocol. Roger asked if there were the same procedures in place for Pickpocket Dam. Jennifer replied the Town does have control of Pickpocket Dam and there is a sluice gate there however there is not an operation and maintenance procedure for it. Jennifer reminded the committee the Town is not in the business of flooding prevention from a dam management prospective. Its one thing to operate Great Dam but it's another thing to coordinate managing Pickpocket Dam in coordination with Great Dam. Roger asked if the fixed position of the sluice gate at Pickpocket Dam is shut. Jennifer replied yes.

Jennifer Perry stayed and updated the committee on the many things going on with the water resource side of DPW. DPW is dealing with multiple state and federal regulations that we have to comply as the Town and a lot of them go back to the Clean Water Act.

Water Supply: The Town has been working with Weston & Sampson in regards to water alternatives and the reactivation of the Gilman and Stadium wells. They have compiled a very large and detailed report and it has been sent to the state for review. This review process will take months before we hear back from the state on our request to reactivate the wells. Weston & Sampson has given a pre estimate on what it would take to do the final design and construction of a ground water treatment facility at Gilman Park. This facility would treat all the ground water; Gilman, Stadium and Lary Lane wells. This is an approximate \$6,000,000 to \$8,000,000 project. It would take care of the immediate drinking water needs of the Town. What would have an immediate impact is the state regulations on in stream flow although we don't know when these regulations will come. What we have been told is if and when they do get passed the Exeter

River during low flow time, that being the summer, the river would not be available for drinking water usage. Therefore, we view the ground water integration into our water resources as a key piece of the solving of the puzzle. If we do not have that ground water piece we will be extremely hindered in the summer time as far as relying on the river as a source of our water.

Lionel asked for clarification on even if we do not take the dam out our water source will be impacted and the need for alternative ground water will be needed with these new regulations on in stream flows. Jennifer replied yes.

Storm Water: The Town is under EPA regulations; we do have a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) for stormwater. Exeter is considered a Phase II Community; Exeter has a stormwater system large enough to have to follow EPA regulations and is currently at the end of a 5-year permit which is the first permit the Town has ever had for stormwater. We are awaiting our second permit which most likely will come the first of next year. The first permit was somewhat self regulated and self established, we set our own goals and had to report on them annually. The second permit EPA will be playing a more active role and establishing minimum requirements the Town will have to meet. The Town has over 64 point discharges which make it challenging; rather than just the one point like waste water. Jennifer stated as we go into more permitting the rules and regulations are stricter.

Waste Water: The discharge into the Squamscott River is regulated by the NPDES permit for that single discharge. The Town is still awaiting a new NPDES permit; we have been riding off our old one that expired in 2006. We had a draft permit that was issued back in 2008 but it was never finalized because initially it did not include nutrients. The new permit, we have been told by EPA will include total nitrogen a limit of 3 mg per liter. The 3 mg per liter limitation is a challenge because our current waste water facility is aerated lagoons which provides a very simple biological treatment process but does not lower nitrogen levels. Our current level is about 14 mg per liter.

Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO): In addition to our waste water permit for the single point discharge at the Waste Water Treatment Plant we have included in that permit what's called a Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO). When our sewer system becomes overwhelmed during a major storm and we don't have the capacity piping wise to get all waste water and storm water that gets into the waste water system to the waste water plant, we will have a CSO event. The excess, which is mostly storm water, but has some waste water in it, will discharge at Clemson Pond causing a CSO event. Even though it is permitted through our permit we are still aggressively looking to identify these violators who have their storm water runoff intrusion into the Towns sewer system. That effort needs to be re doubled and it would serve the Town well to get as much out as possible so when we get into designing a new waste water treatment plant we're only truly designing it for waste water. We are focusing on that but are also being forced to focus on it because we received an administrative order from EPA because we've had more than what they feel is a reasonable amount of CSO's over the years. EPA wants less than four a year and we have had many more than four. There is a concern and the Town takes it very seriously and we have some tight deadlines we have to meet. The Town has to develop some plans to respond to EPA. Jennifer mentioned there are 1,400 catch basins in Town and even when DPW made it a high priority to clean them with our sewer vacor and dedicating a couple of staff we were only able to clean 400 catch basins out of 1,400. The idea of purchasing another vacor just for storm drain cleaning doesn't really make sense; we should really be outsourcing it. It's abrasive to the equipment and have encored a lot of equipment repair cost. The most feasible approach is to sub contract to a vendor who specializes in catch basin cleaning.

Lionel Ingram asked Jennifer if the committee could play a role or do anything in the three areas she just addressed. Jennifer said she would like to think about that.

The committee thanked Jennifer very much for updating the committee on what is going on in the department as well as all the changes coming down the pipe permit wise.

6. Other Issues and Activities of Interest to the Committee – Lionel Ingram:

Lionel Ingram spoke about other areas the committee may need to get involved with. Lionel stated it is not the idea to get involved with other departments who have responsibilities but as the committee responsibilities. Lionel noted that DPW has a number of things underway if we do get rid of the dam. Lionel stated whatever the decision the Town makes in a couple of years about the dam will be contingent upon if there is an alternate water supply or not.

Lionel mentioned these areas:

- **The recon nascence idea.** To have someone go up the river twice a year and look for potential hazards and point of contamination sites. Lionel would like to train a team of people to travel the river in the Spring and late Fall to look for these potential hazards so we can inform the Town and DPW of issues of concern. Lionel suggested this team of people be high school students with the hopes they become involved in the community as they become adults.
- **Reduction of flood plain insurance.** Review where the Town stands and possibly get us in a different category and reduce the insurance cost for people who live along the river and in the flood plain.
- **Infrastructure of the Squamscott River (suggested by Peter Richardson).** To look at the sea level rise over the long haul, 50-100 years. Also, be aware of the salt marshes and the risk of losing them. Lionel reminded the committee members that when the committee was formed years ago there was a Phase I and a Phase II. Phase I was the Exeter River/Squamscott and Phase II was the Squamscott River in itself. Lionel feels it is now time to start thinking about what is in the Squamscott River
- **Newfields and Stratham involvement with the Squamscott (suggested by Don Clement).** Don reminded the committee that the Squamscott River is also shared with two neighboring Towns; Newfields and Stratham. Don stated that he along with Pete Richardson been working hard in putting some mechanisms in place to bring these two towns to the attention of the State and the rivers program. Don stated there are other attempts to address the issues the committee is talking about.
- **Alternative paths (suggested by Roger Wakeman).** Roger commented on the issues of alternative path making sure the committee has comparable information on the dam repairs as compared to dam removal and whatever the committees role should be as well as interaction and supporting that process. We need to collaborate with Town departments. Lionel mentioned that it will also deal with alternate water and how we are going to handle fire suppression.

Lionel asked the committee members and will ask DPW to give him suggestions of other areas the committee could be looking at, giving everyone 3 weeks, in order for him to get them on an upcoming agenda for the committee members to discuss.

6. Adjourn the Meeting:

The meeting was adjourned at 10:27 a.m. The next meeting was set for November 16, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. in the Nowak Room of the Town Office.

Respectfully Submitted,

Grace Rogers, Public Works Office Manager