

Final Minutes
Approved on March 21, 2013

EXETER RIVER STUDY COMMITTEE MINUTES

January 17, 2013

1. Convene Meeting:

Chairman Lionel Ingram, Mimi Becker, Richard Huber, Don Clement – Selectmen’s Rep., Peter Richardson, Ginny Raub, Rod Bourdon, Frank Patterson, Roger Wakeman – PEA Representative, Paul Vlasich – Town Engineer, Phyllis Duffy – DPW, and Kristen Murphy – Planning were all in attendance. Lionel convened the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

2. Minutes of 11/1/12:

Lionel Ingram polled the Committee for any changes to the minutes of November 1, 2012. No changes were voiced. The minutes were unanimously accepted without a motion.

3. Status of the Exeter River Great Dam Removal Impact Analysis and Feasibility Study – Paul Vlasich & Mimi Becker:

Mimi Becker stated that the Study Committee has met 3 times since the November meeting to review the components of the draft, but did not get to the appendices yet.

- There are gaps due to awaiting formal response from DES on the formal analysis on the submission.
- The Committee is compiling a single text of the comments. The original executive summary needed to be redone as it is a key communication device for the public (to make it user friendly).
- The current report is 2 volumes.
- The public meeting has been postponed twice due to delays from various sources. It is currently on the calendar for February 27, 2013, but may need to be changed to allow a 30 day public review.
- 50 year flood modifications on alternative plan submitted to DES does not meet safety standards, as the DES does not agree to automated gates. Paul Vlasich clarified that the State said that an automated gate does not meet the criteria for non-manual operation of the gate without waivers which DES has not accepted in the past.
- Committee recommends that \$35,000 be used to have the consultant update the dam modification options so that it meets the State requirements. Paul stated that this would be used to ask the consultant what it would take to meet the non-waiver modifications. It was suggested that a timeframe of 60 days for a final report on this.
- Paul stated that they needed to add climate change into the analysis for the report. Also a new concept to meet the DES requirements for the demands of the dam would be a 4-4 ½’ crest gate.

Don Clement asked where the \$35,000 would come from for the update. Paul said that he would need to seek approval from the Board of Selectmen to use some of the monies left over from the \$377,000 from the 2008 warrant article.

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Lionel Ingram stated that it was known that the initial dam modification plan would be lacking as to the 50 year flood.

Frank Patterson asked what the chances are that DES will accept the plan modifications after \$35,000 is put into the additional study.

There was discussion as to clarification of parallel tracks. Parallel tracks would bring the current dam modification plan to the public, advising them that this is where we stand right now but additional modifications have to be made to the plan, along with the removal option in order to keep them up to date, and allow them to comment on it. There would then have to be another meeting after the consultant updates the plan.

Motion: Mimi Becker moved to have Paul Vlasich go to the Town Manager to work out the request for \$35,000 to update the dam modification plan to meet DES standards with a concept which needs no waivers. Motion was seconded by Richard Huber. Vote 7 yea, 1 nay. Peter Richardson opposed the motion.

Mimi expressed concern that the public was told that there would be a public meeting where they would be able to make an informed choice on whether to modify the dam or remove it. Don agreed that nothing should go to the public meeting until there is a viable concept, which includes the looks and costs of the project.

Paul advised that the current “preliminary” report calls for \$1,032,000 for dam removal and \$2,013,000 for the crest gate option. Little River contaminants were high in one sediment sample, however new samples were analyzed and the new samples did not show high levels. There needs to be additional quantifying of sediment movement (how much and where).

Mimi also was concerned about getting the public input before the time runs out for the grant money. June is the last possible extension to still get the grant, so the public meeting would have to be no later than the end of May.

Mimi will work on getting an information release to Paul so he can get it to the public to advise them of what is happening with the project.

4. Other business:

Paul Kirshen (UNH Civil Engineering Research Professor), Robert Roseen of Geosyntec, Stephen Jones (UNH Natural Resources and Marine Sciences Associate Research Professor) and Semra Aytur (UNH Public Health and Epidemiology Assistant Research Professor) were in attendance to discuss CAPE (Climate Adaptation Plan for Exeter).

Paul Kirshen asked for clarification as to the mission of the River Study Committee, and was advised that it was formed by the Board of Selectmen to advise on how to manage flooding issues with the dam, dam modification and other river issues. There were initially many political issues, including the Town and DES and Fish & Game not working well together, ownership of the River, and Conservation Commission boundaries. They are currently working on dam removal / replacement, non-point pollution and river reconnaissance / hazards / water quality.

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There are a number of members who are involved in other committees including the Exeter/Squamscott River Committee, Conservation Committee, and a representative of Phillips Exeter Academy.

Paul Kirshen explained that the CAPE study is a vulnerability analysis of the increased flow and flooding expected in the future, and the effects of it on the climate, including storm water runoff, flooding, habitat, and non-point source pollution.. The CAPE study has the possibility of being a case study used worldwide of a successful adaptation study. Handouts were given detailing these anticipated changes. Community-Based Planning for Climate Change in New Hampshire and New Hampshire's Climate: Past and Future Changes. Paul Kirshen said that there is anticipated increase of flow over the next 100 years and that this potential flow increase should be taken into account in the Exeter River dam design. There is also a group currently working on getting a grant from NOAA to climate change in the Great Bay.

Rob Roseen explained how watershed has changed over time and will change (impact) the look of green infrastructure to manage developing landscapes. Green infrastructure decreases imperviousness, building a sponge factor into landscaping to absorb water, increased peak flow, runoff, flooding resiliency, pollutant load costs.

Nationally green infrastructure has reduced the cost for gray infrastructure by 20-40% in total capital costs. There is also a social and aesthetic value to green infrastructure in that there is more desire to be active outside where there are more trees, and it is cooler in the shade on a hot sunny day. Flood damage reduction benefits all by mitigating the impact of flooding in downtown settings.

Peter Richardson pointed out that Exeter is relatively fully developed. Rob Roseen said that redevelopment actually makes it easier, because the upgrades would be required when changes are requested, just as they are with other changes in building requirements.

Paul Kirshen requested a hard copy of the draft study of the Dam Modification study. Paul Vlasich will forward the PDF of it and get him a hard copy, and Mimi Becker offered to forward an electronic copy of the document with the markups.

Stephen Jones briefly discussed that there have already been some ecosystem and aquatic impacts; blue crabs have been caught downstream, river herring population changes, water quality and conditions have changed.

Semra Aytur briefly discussed pest changes including more mosquitoes and ticks and the diseases they carry and the holistic components: Not worrying about being in an unhealthy environment - lowered stress levels. Community responding in a healthy way - reduction in asthma; People will be more active – reduction in medical costs.

Mimi Becker asked whether maintenance of public utilities, specifically electricity, was being address in the CAPE study, as this is a local vulnerability. Paul Kirshen didn't believe that this was going to be part of the study.

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Paul Kirshen would like to come back to the next meeting on February 21, 2013 to be on the agenda and continue the discussion and how to fit in with the River Study Committee. He will also forward additional information to members by email.

5. The way ahead until the public meeting – Mimi Becker:

There was discussion of working with a UNH group for the NOAA grant, as the Town is currently working on getting a NOAA grant as well. However, Paul Vlasich explained that the Town is working on getting it for dam removal whereas the UNH group is trying to get it for habitat restoration for river herring. There is an application deadline of February 19, 2013, and the approval would be good for 3 years.

Rod Bourdon suggested that it would make sense to apply for the grant even if it doesn't end up being used, if you don't apply there is no chance to use it, if you do the money could be there if the Town chooses dam removal.

Stephen Jones said Ken LaValley is in the group at UNH working on the grant proposal and will have Ken contact Paul Vlasich regarding the grant.

Don Clement recommended that Paul Vlasich run this by the Town Manager and Board of Selectmen to get the OK to go ahead and apply for the grant.

Peter Richardson raised the issue of the need for a fish ladder, and communicating with Fish & Game before moving ahead with the updated modification plan. Paul Vlasich shared that the consultant has been charged with this matter and what it would mean to the final costs.

6. Public comment:

None

7. Adjourn the meeting:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:52 a.m. The next regular meeting was set for Thursday, February 21, 2012 at 9:00 a.m. in the Nowak Room of the Town Office.