

Convene Meeting

The meeting convened at 9:05 AM in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office on January 23, 2014. Members present were Richard Huber, Peter Richardson, Dr. Mimi Larsen Becker, Lionel Ingram (Chair), Virginia Raub, Frank Patterson, Rod Bourdon, Sallie Soule (Department of Environmental Services (DES)), Peter Walker (VHB), Don Clement (Selectman), Frank Ferraro (Selectman) and Kristin Murphy (Natural Resource Planner).

Minutes

Dr. Becker moved to approve the minutes from January 9, 2014, Mr. Richardson seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Mr. Don Clement spoke about a misconception on the timing of the Great Dam Study. He brought physical reports from 2003, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and the current 2013 feasibility study report. Each report ran analysis on parts of the Exeter River and Dam. Each report was published by various state agencies and private consulting groups. He pointed out there is a lot of information available about the river and the Great Dam and the current discussion about possible dam removal did not appear recently.

Mr. Frank Ferraro pointed out he was able to find previous reports on the town website without too much work.

Mr. Lionel Ingram said the initial 2008 committee did not study the dam for removal. In late summer of 2008 DES offered money to study alternatives to the water supply. He said it would be a misconception it was the suggestion by DES to remove the dam. Mr. Ingram clarified that it was up to the selectman and citizen process to figure out how to modify the dam and find an alternative water supply.

Mr. Ferraro commented that the dam had been studied for many years and the public should understand the ground water treatment plant idea and the dam are separate issues. If the dam is taken out there should be an alternative water supply and this is included in the current report.

Mr. Mike Lambert supported the efforts of the River Study Committee. He said there were uneducated comments made in town about the dam that are not true. He suggested the best thing to do was to get the word out as much as possible about the dam.

Mr. Ingram said the purpose of the committee is to be clear that the committee makes decisions independent of DES.

Dr. Becker further clarified that the committee is based on factual issues and those involved in the study should behave with civility.

Mr. Lambert felt the need to be blunter about the information available about the dam.

Mr. Jeff Turner, owner of the Green Bean on Water, commented on the historical assets that the dam brings to the town. He was also concerned if the fish ladder attached to his wall were to be dismantled; the integrity of his wall could be compromised.

Discussion of Continuing Information Program Regarding the Great Dam

Mr. Frank Patterson talked about the fireside chat forum related to the Great Dam. The talk called: Great Dam or Free Flowing River will be on February 6, 2014 at 7PM in the Exeter Town Library. It will be a question and answer period for anyone who wishes to attend. There will be a panel to answer questions. Currently Sallie Soule from DES and Peter Walker from Vanasse Hangen Brustlin Inc (VHB) will be in attendance to answer questions. Ms. Deb Loisell from DES will be invited as well. Questions can be forwarded to Mr. Patterson at fvpatterson@comcast.net . Mr. Patterson will moderate and record all questions and answers at the chat.

Mr. Ingram suggested the topic of the outcome of dam removal, what it will look like up and down stream and to present it in an unbiased manner.

Ms. Soule added the panel could speak on the experience of other dam projects in New Hampshire. There needed to be time to get information together and make a short presentation.

Mr. Walker will be available to talk about what the river will look like and examples from other projects. He will draw examples from the Ashuelot River, Winnicut River, and the Black Brook River.

Dr. Becker asked how the committee will address the water quality questions.

Mr. Walker said he can answer most of the questions to the best of his knowledge available through his consulting and the report. He also noted that the committee has held VHB accountable for accuracy and clarifications throughout the study. He also noted the movement to remove the dam came from observers of the committee.

Lori Whitney co-owner of the Green Bean on Water commented on her concerns for who will be responsible for what could happen to their property if their wall along the river is compromised.

Mr. Ferraro said the bank will be stabilized if the dam is removed. From the cost of removing the dam a major sum will be spent on stabilization and engineering studies.

Ms. Whitney asked if she could get something in writing from the responsible party.

Mr. Ferraro said there cannot be a guarantee that something will not go wrong. The assurance should be the engineering studies done before a possible dam removal. He also mentioned he shortened the American Rivers film about the Manchester dam removal is available for viewing.

Mr. Walker said whether the dam is removed or not, the selectman are responsible for decisions made about the dam. The engineering design will be submitted to DES. Engineers in general are serious about their designs and will do everything to make sure they are accurate including inspections conducted during construction.

The discussion turned to the river walk planned by Ms. Virginia Raub and Mr. Peter Richardson. The first walk will either be February 15 or 22 2014 and will be accompanied with an information sheet that VHB is currently putting together. The walk will be to various locations around the dam. A second walk will be before the March 8 information session and will meet at the bridge. Peter Walker will be available to answer questions then.

Questions were raised about how to get the information pamphlet out to the public. There could be a town wide mailing and Mr. Ingram will speak with Paul Vlasich to get the pamphlet out promptly.

Role of Deliberative Session

There will be a 3-5 minute presentation about the dam study at the February 1 Deliberative Session and will not speak about the warrant article. Mr. Ferraro said that proponents of the dam will present based on warrant article.

Mr. Huber wanted clarification about what will happen if the warrant fails.

Mr. Ferraro said then it will go back to the BOS to address the letter of deficiency.

March 8, 2014 there will be an information session about the dam at the town hall from 3-6PM.

Response to Selectman Quandt's Letter to the Editor (LTE) of the Exeter Newsletter

Mr. Patterson will set the record straight in response to Selectman Quandt's LTE. He will write his own LTE including factual information from the study.

Dr. Becker suggested a briefing packet for the press that would include the executive summary and similar items from the information pamphlet.

Town member Mr. Dennis Brady suggested the Carriage town newsletter as a good platform to get information out.

Town member Ms. Bonnie Flythe said she had collected signatures for both petitions. She reported that 50% of the people she talked to were not aware of the dam issue. She liked the town wide flyer idea and said she received useful questions from the people she talked to. Ms. Flythe also commented on a job well done to the committee on the work done so far.

Mr. Ferraro suggested that Andie Swanson video the fireside chat and other information meetings as well to be aired on channel 22 and 98.

Mr. Arthur Baillargeon said space is limited at the library and noted there may not be enough time for all questions.

Ms. Raub said there could be a link for people to submit questions such as Facebook.
Ms. Kristin Murphy asked where they could funnel questions from the public.
A Gmail account will be made for questions about the dam. Ms. Murphy will create the account and Mr. Richardson will check the account frequently. Mr. Ingram will also put together a document with all of the information sessions coming up. Dr. Becker will put the document in press release form.

Mr. Huber noted at the past selectman's meeting it was asked what will happen if the impoundment is maintained, what agency will regulate the water quality issues as a result of keeping the impoundment. Mr. Walker said that EPA and DES both regulate water quality. Ted Diers from DES wrote up a discussion on water quality which was transmitted to the River Study Committee in letter form. Ms. Soule will coordinate with Mr. Walker to answer the water quality questions. Mr. Clement noted another project that was studying the Squamscot River but will also look at the Exeter River in terms of nitrogen, dissolved oxygen, and total daily maximum load. The Exeter River is currently on the EPA rivers impaired list.

Task List for Information Process:

Mr. Patterson: Fireside Chat, moderator and scribe, Letter to the Editor
Mr. Ingram: Talk with Mr. Vlasich about town wide mailing of information
Dr Becker and Mr. Ingram: March 8 Information session, press release for events
Ms. Murphy: Getting Information out on Facebook and setting up Gmail account for Q+A
Mr. Richardson: Check Gmail account for questions
Conservation Commission and Mr. Richardson: Continued information process
Ms. Soule and Mr. Walker: Respond to water quality questions and get to Mr. Ingram

Mr. Huber will keep track of all the questions and decide if the questions can be answered quickly or keep list of questions to be answered on February 20. If getting questions already answered, use information compiled.

All questions about the Great Dam can be sent to exeterdamstudy@gmail.com

The next River Study Committee meeting is on February 20, 2014 in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Offices.

The meeting adjourned at 11:03AM

Respectfully Submitted,

Sarah McGraw