

**Exeter Heritage Commission**

**Wheelwright Room**

**Exeter Town Office Bldg.**

**February 13, 2013**

**Members present:** *Mary Dupré, Jaime Lopez, Peter Smith, Planning Board rep. Kelly Bergeron and Chairwoman Julie Gilman*

**Guest:** *Selectman Don Clement*

Chairwoman Gilman convened the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the Wheelwright Room in the Town Office Building.

- **Follow up/general discussion and response relative to the study to remove the Exeter River Great Dam.**

Selectman Clement and also a member of the River Study Committee was invited to provide an update to the ongoing Great Dam Removal Study.

As background, Mr. Clement stated in 2000 the Town received a letter of deficiency from the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Dam Bureau stating the Great Dam did not meet NHDES Dam Bureau safety standards. The Town and other agencies started working to develop alternatives to address this deficiency.

In 2009, the Town requested of DES the opportunity to pursue the upgrade of the discharge capacity of the Dam to meet the 50-year design storm flow (and with other stated criteria) or to remove the Dam.

In 2010 a RFP was drafted for a dam removal feasibility study and impact analysis and was ultimately awarded to the consulting engineering firm of VHB (Vanasse Hangen Brusten). Public informational hearings/sessions were held (and future meetings are to be scheduled) to hear citizens comments and concerns with members of VHB, the State and Town organizations present. Work was progressing when it was determined the design models needed to reflect the newly revised climate change figures. To date, the analysis is complete but the alternative dam models submitted to DES for review have not met their criteria and have asked for modifications to meet the deficiencies. It is apparent the Dam will need to undergo significant modification.

Of interest to the Heritage Commission is the requirement the proposal be <sup>1</sup>subject to Section 106 regulations set by the National Historic Preservation Act. Mr. Clement explained until a final modification design is approved by DES there cannot be a Section 106 Review completed; Heritage Commission is not being left out of the loop.

With a copy of a draft report prepared by VHB, Mr. Clement remarked there has been a great deal of input as well as financial contributions from various agencies and organizations. There is a great amount of interest in dam removal, especial head-of- the-tide dams like the Great Dam as an environmental issue. Responding to questions, Mr. Clement noted VHB is responsible for preparing a design that DES will accept (currently on design “e”). Next step is the financial analysis of comparing the cost of removal vs. the cost of modifying. Mr. Clement felt we are a long way out before the voters are asked to make a decision on the project.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Historic Preservation Act passed in 1966 set up an Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as an independent federal agency to promote preservation, enhancement and productive use of the nation’s historic resources. A Section 106 Review falls under the guidance of the ACHP and allows an opportunity for those interested parties to influence projects that affect them. A Section 106 encourages but does not mandate preservation

- **Approval of minutes of January 16, 2013 meeting**

Ms. Dupré moved to accept the draft minutes as presented; seconded by Mr. Lopez. Motion carried with Ms. Bergeron abstaining.

- **Baggage Building project** No further update; architect meeting pending.

- **Future project discussion**

- Walking Tours

At the American Independence Museum, Ms. Gilman viewed a smart phone app designed for touring the Museum. In discussion, it appears they were willing to share the technology. She feels it is something possibly adaptable for a Town walking tour. Also, she will forward to members a link to a town in Maine with walking tours with informational signage in front of each building similar to what was previously discussed at a Commission meeting; this might be a model for Town use. It was suggested one might be done for the start of the 375<sup>th</sup> celebration.

- 375<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Exeter

Ms. Gilman spoke on the mapping presentation review she wished to schedule for the general public sometime before April. She and Mr. Lopez developed a Power Point presentation comprised of antique maps and the aerial view maps of Exeter from the 1800's to the mid 1900's generated by the recently completed Town wide Mapping Survey. (CLG funding was received for the project and a public presentation is part of the educational component of the grant.) Mr. Lopez proceeded to show the presentation; Ms. Gilman was looking for feedback for additional information/formatting to possibly be included.

Discussion determined the inclusion of a narrative between and accompanying the maps would aid in the transition illustrating the different growth periods of the Town. Ms. Dupré agreed to research both Phineas Merrill's and Charles Bell's histories of Exeter for historic anecdotal material between 1802 and 1950. Additional material may be found in the narrative accompanying the final report.

- **Demolition request updates**

No applications received. A revision to the demolition review process will appear on the March 12<sup>th</sup> ballot as Article 17.

- **Properties at risk?**

None at this time

- **New Members/New Chair**

Again, the topic of searching out new members for the Commission was discussed. Ms. Bergeron is replacing Ms. Corson as the Planning Board representative. Also, Ms. Gilman stated a new Chair is needed as ethically with her as a Selectwoman she should not serve as Chairman.

At next meeting, Ms. Gilman wishes to discuss possible proposals for upcoming Certified Local Government grant program through the NH Division of Historical Resource.

Ms. Dupré motioned to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Lopez. Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub