

**Report to Exeter Board of Selectmen and Summary of the Great Dam Remembrance Committee meeting, held April 1, 2015 at the Exeter Historical Society**

We had a discussion of what is being lost in the historic district that requires mitigation. We agreed that by removing the dam, the town will see a reduction and lowering of the flat water impoundment above the dam and the removal of the spillway and mechanical devices on the headworks, which represent the historic connection between the dam and the mill, and provides a reminder of the town's industrial past.

**Our prioritized list of mitigation measures, gleaned from two public meetings, Feb. 24, and March 24:**

1. Preserve the headworks. This can likely be done without using any of the funds budgeted for mitigation. Some details will need to be worked out, in particular whether to remove or reconstruct the trash gate/ bulkhead.
2. Create, assemble and store archival materials on the history of the dam and the Exeter Manufacturing Company and insure that these are accessible to the public at the Exeter Public Library and/or the Exeter Historical Society.
3. The VHB consultants should create a photo and video archive of the removal process which should also be made available to the public for future researchers and provide suitable raw materials for historical displays on the dam as suggested in item 5 below and for a video production about the history of the dam, the river and the mills that could be created at some time in the future.
4. Apply for a New Hampshire State Highway Historic Marker or commission a similar marker for the site. The advantage of a state sign is that it will become part of a list available to tourists online.
5. Create historical exhibits for display inside the library. The "history wall" at Exeter Hospital might serve as an appropriate model. Decisions about exactly where to place the displays will need to be worked out with the library administration. The stairway from the first to the second floor offers one excellent option that has been suggested by the library director and has the support of our committee.
6. Install three etched glass viewing stations that can display images of what the river looked like before the dam's removal, superimposed on views from String Bridge, Great Bridge and Founder's Park (or the Library).

**We believe these six measures can be accomplished with funds already budgeted for the project. In addition, a number of other worthy mitigation measures have been proposed. Though we believe these projects cannot be implemented as part of the Section 106 mitigation process, we do think the town should give them serious consideration down the road.**

- Publish a walking tour brochure: paper, online, or as a smartphone app. VHB estimates this would cost between \$10,000 and \$15,000 to accomplish as part of the MOA mitigation. As long as the archival materials are preserved, a walking tour can be created sometime down the road by one of the local historical agencies or associations.
- Enhance access to the River. In our public hearings we perceived a strong desire to make it possible for people to gain access to the riverside in the area between Great and String Bridges for fishing and other recreational purposes. This could take the form of construction of
  - A Riverwalk along the riverbank (a walkway from String Bridge to Founders' Park is already in the plans for library renovation)

- Stairs down to the river from String Bridge or Great Bridge.
  - A boardwalk (Like the one downstream).
- Publish a Book on the history of dams in the Exeter area by a historian. It might encompass the Exeter Manuf. Co.
- Construct a kiosk at founder's park with historical displays on the river and the dam. This idea could be considered as an alternative to the library exhibits should those not work out.
- Encourage local school children to work on projects about the history of the dam.

Respectfully submitted,

The Great Dam Remembrance Committee: Bill Jordan, Chair; Pam Gjettum, Exeter Historic District Commission; Dick Huber, Exeter River Study Committee; John Merckle, Exeter Heritage Commission; Barbara Rimkunas, Exeter Historical Society;

In consultation with Section 106 Consulting Parties: Donald Robie, Exeter Investment Co., and Brian Griset.