

Draft Minutes

River Study Committee

July 16, 2015

1. Convene the Meeting

Chairman Lionel Ingram called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office building. Members present were Rod Bourdon, Frank Ferraro, Roger Wakeman, Virginia Raub, and Richard Huber. Also in attendance was Paul Vlasich, Town Engineer, Jake St. Antonio of VHB, Eric Hutchins of NOAA, and Selectman Don Clement.

2. Minutes of the April Meeting

A Motion was made by Mr. Huber and seconded by Mr. Bourdon to accept the minutes of the April 30, 2015 meeting, as presented. Motion carried – all in favor, with Ferraro abstaining.

3. Report on the Status of Dam Removal (Paul Vlasich)

a. Mill Agreement

Paul Vlasich talked about a new condenser cooling system not needing the use of town water. He said the Board of Selectmen approved that agreement. He said the town would contribute \$437,500, which is good as the warrant was for \$542,000. He said this is a good solution.

b. Permitting

Mr. Vlasich talked about wetlands permitting. He said the removal of the dam is straight forward. They need to come up with a solution that is going to last a long time, let fish pass, and reduce flooding. The town applied for a wetlands permit on April 20. On May 28, DES held a meeting at Fish & Game. He said they have another month to go with the permitting process.

Jake St. Antonio, of VHB, went over the design which was submitted with the permit application in April. He talked about the river bottom. There is a 6 ½ foot drop post dam removal without doing any grading. The fish won't be able to pass through. If there is a fully graded river channel there is a potential for not having water at the intake. They are looking to grade a channel that would be passable by fish. They are aiming for a slope below 3%. It is a v-shaped channel with depths of 3 ½ feet to the top of the slope. The design also included a series of boulder clusters. They are proposing randomly placed boulders. During the May meeting, they talked about grading being more minimalistic. They need further discussions with fish biologists and NOAA to talk about design enhancement. There was concern about the boulder clusters placed in a linear fashion because of turbulence. He said they are looking to refine this. They are looking to submit revised plans back to the DES by July 27.

Mr. Ferraro asked a few questions pertaining to the map shown. Mr. St. Antonio explained.

Mr. Vlasich said they are still in the process of the design with no wetlands permit. There isn't a final design yet. They will not be taking the dam down in September. There was a NOAA grant due by July 2. He said they put in an application for \$610,960. He talked about how they came up with that figure. If awarded, he said they can't use the money until December/January.

Going back to the wetlands permit, Mr. Vlasich said they still have to get some abutter agreements. One big concern is a retaining wall. It is a concern that the vibrations from removal of the dam may move the retaining wall. He said he is getting another consultant to further investigate.

c. Design

Mr. Vlasich said they want the design so they won't have to do anything to the river. He met with the Abenaki Nation and had talked about a ceremony for the removal of the dam. They didn't want to do their ceremony until there is a firm date. They were most concerned with the impact of the fish in the river. Their request was to allow them to do their ceremony with little fanfare.

d. Grants

Mr. Ferraro suggested the Board of Selectmen send a letter State elected officials, such as Governor Hassen, explaining the history of why the Town is taking out the dam, and in applying for the grant say any assistance from them would be appreciated. Selectman Don Clement said he was going to ask what the BOS can do to prompt the grant. Mr. Vlasich said that sounds like a reasonable request. He said one requirement of the grant was to have a letter of support from Senator Ayotte. Selectman Clement said he thinks it is important that agencies that provide the grant know the Town is in full support. He said he will bring it forth to the BOS at their next meeting. NOAA Fish Biologist Eric Hutchins said a letter wouldn't work right now, from the ranking perspective. He said this grant only has \$4 million available. There is going to be another round of funding. The application process is 95% identical to the one the town just applied for. He suggested the town think about applying, just in case. He also suggested the town get debriefed on any grant that has been turned down, so as to learn what they can improve for the next application. Mr. Ferraro said it might still be good to ask for the letters generically, for future NOAA grants.

Selectman Clement asked about the concerns pertaining to the retaining wall. He asked if there is going to be a performance bond. Mr. Vlasich said every project they bid out there is a performance bond.

Mr. St. Antonio gave a 106 update. He said they have been working with CORE to update the language of the MOA. Chair Ingram asked who signs the MOA for the town. Selectman Clement said the Board of Selectmen would sign. Mr. Ingram asked Mr. St. Antonio

if anything has come up that is of concern. Mr. St. Antonio said there is nothing of concern. He did talk about historical markers, saying the State has one marker, and DHR requires another.

Mr. Huber, representative for the Great Dam Remembrance Committee said they have not gotten a CAPE update. Selectman Clement said Paul Kirshen has been talking about a preliminary meeting with staff to talk about a definite date. Kristen Murphy and Selectman Clement are coordinating with him.

Mr. Wakeman said he gets questions about the schedule. He said it should be communicated in some way because now they are hearing the dam removal date is being pushed back a year. Mr. Vlasich said this meeting was the first step in the information going out to the public. He talked about putting together a press release. Selectman Clement wanted confirmation the dam will not be removed in September. Mr. Vlasich confirmed, saying there a 0% chance to start in September. Selectman Clement asked for a timeframe. Mr. Vlasich said they need to get the permits. They are looking at July 1 now. He said they need to have a more complete talk about what the issues are with the plan before going to the BOS. Mr. Ferraro suggested an email go out to the BOS to let them know the September start date has been delayed.

Mr. Vlasich thanked the water resource people from DPW for coming up with a way to supply water to the town without their biggest resource.

4. Other Business

None.

5. Public Comment

None.

6. Adjourn the Meeting

Mr. Vlasich said he will have some more information on the wetlands permit in September. The next River Study Committee will be on Thursday September 3, 2015 at 9 am.

Chair Ingram adjourned the meeting at 10:14am.

Respectively submitted,

Nicole Piper,
Recording Secretary