

Final Minutes

River Study Committee

October 29, 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, Virginia Raub, Richard Huber, and Peter Richardson. Also in attendance was Paul Vlasich, Town Engineer, Eric Hutchins from NOAA, Pete Walker from VHB, and Selectman Don Clement. Roger Wakeman and Frank Ferraro were absent.

2. Minutes of the September Meeting

Chair Ingram said they would discuss the September minutes at the next meeting. Ms. Raub said the year "2016" needs to be referenced under "Grants".

3. Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREP) (Abigail Gronberg)

Abigail Gronberg, Technical Assistance Program Manager, gave a very detailed PowerPoint presentation about the Piscataqua Region Environmental Planning Assessment (PREPA) 2015.

PREPA started in 2010. An update was initiated in 2014. Assessment forms were developed with partners and were sent out to 52 towns with the help of the RPC. She showed a page of the Assessment. She said this project is slated to come out every 5 years. The 2010 document was full of information but it wasn't real useful. This time it is split up into three sections: Threats, Findings, and the new section Actions.

One big threat is Nitrogen loading. She showed a pie chart showing the primary contributor to this is human waste. It was followed by atmospheric deposition, chemical fertilizer, and animal waste. This information is broken down in the large report. In the sub report, she said it is broken down even more. Mr. Hutchins asked what percentage of atmospheric deposition is from nature versus human. Ms. Gronberg said the full report has a lot of information with that answer.

The next threat Ms. Gronberg talked about is impervious cover. There is a new method for figuring out percentages that will be included in a new report slated to come out in 2018. Ms. Raub asked who uses this data. Ms. Gronberg said at the Conservation Commission level it is valuable to have this information so they can make a good recommendation to the Planning Board. She also said it was good to have language for communities who don't have regulation in place for percentage of impervious cover per property. She showed a map of the impervious land and conserved land.

The third threat is climate change.

Ms. Gronberg said PREPA shines in the Findings category, focusing on freshwater wetlands, shore land protection, stormwater management, and climate change.

The final section is Actions. Ms. Gronberg talked about some recommendations for Exeter, one being to adopt the fertilizer application buffers for all surface waters. She said healthy lawns means clean water. It is important to get information out about fertilizer to educate.

Her key resources are SE Watershed Alliance and Land Conservation Map for ME & NH. She said you can visit www.PREPestuaries.org/PREPA for more information.

Mr. Huber said he is encouraged by all of this information.

Selectman Clement said he has a meeting tomorrow morning about the fertilizer group. The goal is to put together some sort of ordinance for the town.

4. Report of the Status of the Great Dam Removal (Paul Vlasich)

Mr. Vlasich gave a map of the river with some plans. He said they have an extension on the wetlands permit. The basis of the design and plans submitted was done in September. The permitting decision is due January 8, 2016. He said a tremendous amount of work has been done regarding planning and permitting. He said they have a direction on how to head. He said he had a meeting with VHB yesterday. Most conversation was around the cross vane. The purpose was to try to maintain elevation up the river and to eliminate potential scouring. At the end of the meeting they still thought the vane was necessary. He said one other idea after the first year of construction, is to take a look and see if any tweaking is needed of the project to make improvements, as they will miss the fish passage. He talked about the NOAA Coast Ecosystem Resiliency Funding Grant, where they are asking for \$610,960. Because if it is a NOAA project, there are some potential components they would need additional monitoring. If they get the grant they will be required to monitor the streambed and a biological component where they would need to see if the fish passage was successful. Selectman Clement said regarding the monitoring of successful fish passage, a lot will have to do with the fish ladder effectiveness, and he is not sure how effective it is. Mr. Vlasich said Fish & Game has that data available. The town is providing a cage and Fish & Game will be collecting data. Mr. Richardson asked if Pickpocket Dam will be removed eventually. Mr. Vlasich said a breach analysis is being required through the capital improvement process. Mr. Bourdon asked how high the wall is the map. Mr. Vlasich said it will be 1-1.5'. Construction of the large cross vane consists of large stones that are put in a certain shape with a base underneath.

5. Memorandum of Agreement for the removal of the Exeter Great Dam (Lionel)

Mr. Walker said the Remembrance Committee met and held three public meetings. The BOS made a recommendation to the Army Corp about a set of mitigation options. Since May, internal drafts of an MOA circulated with the Corp. That turned into a final draft MOA that went out to all consulting parties. In sending out the MOA, a deadline was established of October 30, 2015 for all questions/comments to be in. Most parties have responded that the MOA looks good. DHR made some comments that have gone out. They will wait until

tomorrow for further comments and have committed to DHR's changes. He said the BOS has voted to have Mr. Dean sign the MOA on behalf of the town. He said hopefully by November it will be fully executed. Ms. Raub suggested writing out some acronyms for clarity. Mr. Huber pointed out a spelling error, and also suggested consistently spelling out acronyms. Chair Ingram said he will send a letter out with recommendations.

Motion: A Motion was made by Mr. Huber and seconded by Mr. Richardson to give Chair Ingram the authority to sign on behalf of the River Study Committee. Motion carried – all in favor.

Mr. Hutchins said one stipulation stands out (#6). He said this is creating something that will be exhibited through the town that you want a final entity to be approving of. He said they will want to figure out who get to sign off on this. Mr. Walker clarified Item 6. He said the intent was to have an education interpretive display. One change occurred through drafting by the Remembrance Committee.

Mr. Hutchins said it is not too early to think about cleanup of the river. He said this project looks on track now for July 1. He would like to put together a Saturday morning clean-up around that date. He said there are mussels in the river and they could do a "mussel chuck" to throw them back in the water. He said there may be some depressions that hold a fish. He said this is just an effort to get people involved. It is good to target a date and do some outreach. It would be one way to celebrate while doing a good thing. It would also be an opportunity for the broader community to come work with agencies who have worked on this project. Selectman Clement said DPW did a great clean-up 4 or 5 years ago. Mr. Hutchins said 90% of what will come out of the river is recyclable. Chair Ingram said they will keep this in on the radar. He likes the idea of a celebratory attitude. Mr. Richardson asked how far upstream they would go. Mr. Walker said as high as Court Street, and certainly Gilman Park and Little River.

6. Other Business

Mr. Huber asked about the Native American river restoration. Mr. Vlasich said they have asked this to be private, but it is in the works.

7. Public Comment

None.

8. Adjourn the Meeting

The next River Study Committee will be on Thursday January 7, 2016 at 9 am, and they will have two sets of minutes to review.

Chair Ingram adjourned the meeting at 10:30am.

Respectively submitted,
Nicole Piper, Recording Secretary

