

Draft Minutes

River Study Committee

June 16, 2016

1. Convene the Meeting

Chairman Lionel Ingram called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office building. Members present were Rod Bourdon, Roger Wakeman, Frank Ferraro, Virginia Raub, and Richard Huber. Also in attendance was Eric Hutchins from NOAA, and Selectwoman Julie Clement.

2. Minutes of the May 16, 2016 meeting

Chair Ingram said they would take up these minutes at the next meeting.

4. Project Update

Paul Vlasich, Town Engineer, was not present but provided Chair Ingram with a Project Update Memorandum which Chair Ingram went through. He said that Mr. Vlasich plans to have a public meeting on Wednesday, June 29th to allow people to talk about timelines and ask questions. Mr. Vlasich had said it is hard to predict a timeline for the dam due to weather.

Chair Ingram continued with Mr. Vlasich's memo, and said that permission has been obtained from NH Fish & Game to begin a slow draw down of the river on July 1. The purpose of this is to allow fish and wildlife time to adjust to change in the water elevations. The purpose is also to allow groundwater elevation time to stabilize to lessen forces on the structures along the river.

Mr. Ferraro had some questions about the consultant. He asked if the cost of the dam removal going up new information. Chair Ingram said no, there is enough money to take the dam out, but not enough money to do things like historical aspects and such. Mr. Ferraro said he doesn't want people to think the bond wasn't sufficient to cover the removal of the dam because all of that is funded except now there are a few additional costs. Chair Ingram said the phasing has not changed.

Mr. Hutchins said he was at the meeting with NH Fish & Game and they said the draw down will be 6 inches per day. He said they will make that mark because they want to proceed. The level will drop to around 5 feet. They proposed a notch in the dam to ensure the level can be dropped.

Chair Ingram said wetlands seed mix has been ordered for after the draw down. Mr. Wakeman asked how far upstream that mix will go. Mr. Hutchins said he is not sure, but said he is not worried about it and there are a lot of seedlings in the sediment. Mr. Huber asked if they need to seed to prevent invasive species. Mr. Hutchins said in comparing study sites at

dam removals where some were seeded and some weren't, there was not much of a difference. He said the river corridors are loaded with invasive species anyways.

Chair Ingram continued with the memo, and said a detailed project phasing presentation will be given to the public at the public information meeting on June 29th at 6:30pm in the Exeter Library.

Chair Ingram went on to say the last item on the memo is about the Pickpocket Fish Monitoring Structure. He said town participation is required with this as part of the NOAA grant. Mr. Dean knows the details of this. He assured that the town will not have to pay for this. Mr. Ferraro said if Fish & Game wants something different then they should pay for it. Mr. Hutchins said last week there was a meeting at Pickpocket with VHB, DES, and NH Fish & Game to talk about the letter of deficiency and funding. He said they are using sonar to count the fish which isn't always accurate so that is why there needs to be a cage so they can get an accurate fish count and get samples. He said everybody at that meeting was cognizant of Exeter's issues. They talked about what works best financially, for DPW, and for the fish. In regards to the letter of deficiency issue, VHB is contracted to do a breach analysis. He said nothing should be designed until they get the data from that analysis. Mr. Wakeman asked if the discussion at the meeting centered around the hydraulic impact of the dam removal. Mr. Hutchins answered it did not. Mr. Wakeman asked if the LOMAR came up at all. Mr. Hutchins said it didn't.

Chair Ingram asked the Committee if they had any schedule questions. Mr. Hutchins said there is a schedule on bid packages and that still stands. He said there will be meetings every two weeks to get updates on this.

3. Climate Risk in the Seacoast – Julie LaBranche, RPC

Julie LaBranche, Senior Planner of the Rockingham Planning Commission, was present to talk about a new project starting shortly. He showed a map of the area. The project is called C-RiSe.

Chair Ingram asked Kristen Murphy is she is overseeing this. Ms. Murphy said she is not but she is aware of this project.

Ms. LaBranche said they are just in the phase of data analysis at this point. They got a grant from NOAA to transfer data methodology to inland title communities of Great Bay. There are ten communities included, and Exeter is one of them. She said they will be producing a series of maps that shows sea level rise flooding only for Exeter and a map that will show projected storm surge on top of sea level rise and flooding associated with that. She said they will have statistical tables that show where and what is impacted by each scenario. They have contacted each Town Manager and BOS and asked them if they want to participate in this project and form a Committee. She recommends these Committees consist of elected officials. Board officials, municipal staff like DPW, and others that may have a stake in the results of this project. She is meeting with Mr. Dean on Monday to discuss the project.

She went on to show where Exeter's area of interest is on the map she provided. She said storm surge maps will show how the coastal flood plain will change.

Mr. Ferraro asked what models were used to come up with the sea level rise. Ms. LaBranche said it was provided from AECOM, out of Boston. She said they were part of an offshoot FEMA project. The sea level rise modeling was chosen based on data that came out of a report by the USGS in 2012 or 2013. It was a preliminary report used for the National Climate Assessment. Mr. Ferraro asked her if she has confidence in the levels. Ms. LaBranche said they were peer reviewed pieces of science. Mr. Ferraro asked about her confidence level because he had no faith in the CAPE study as they never got any answers out of that. Ms. LaBranche said she would send out information of how the levels were produced. Chair Ingram told her he would send her an email with the Committee's emails.

Ms. LaBranche asked the Committee how they would like to interface with the project. She asked if they would like updates or just the final results. Chair Ingram asked the Committee what they would like to do.

Mr. Huber said he was anticipating an inventory form structures from the CAPE study in Exeter that would be vulnerable. He asked Ms. LaBranche what help she would need to do that inventory, and added she needs people who are familiar with infrastructure. Ms. LaBranche said she can produce the inventory if the town wants her to. Mr. Huber said he is thinking this would be input to the Master Plan. Ms. LaBranche suggested a couple members from the River Study Committee come to her meetings and be a part of this.

Ms. LaBranche said part of the focus of this project is to have information from the Assessment and report that comes out of it to be incorporated into plans for the communities. She said they want this to be a very useable report for communities to use. Mr. Huber asked about a schedule. Ms. LaBranche said from late June through September they will have a series of meetings. She said the schedule will depend on how the communities want to do this.

Mr. Wakeman said they have not had an update on the CAPE study and asked Ms. LaBranche if there will be any tie-in to the C-RiSe project. Ms. LaBranche said she attended the last update they gave and she is in contact with CAPE team and will be looking at their data.

Chair Ingram asked Ms. Murphy if she could find out where CAPE stands. Ms. Murphy said she met with the Town Planner and DPW and got no direction forward. She said there is no more funding. Mr. Ferraro said the last meeting when they talked about the CAPE study they decided they would call it a draft report because CAPE never came before the Committee for questions or comments. Ms. Murphy said in order to come up with the product, it needs to involvement from the town. Chair Ingram asked if there is still a CAPE team. Ms. Murphy said she was not sure. Mr. Hutchins said this new study is a good opportunity to address some questions from the CAPE study.

Mr. Huber said there are coastal communities that are concerned about storm surge and sea rise. He said Exeter has a need to review and look at its vulnerability to extreme precipitation. He said he didn't want to diminish anything from this C-RiSe program.

Chair Ingram asked the Committee what they want to do with the C-RiSe project. Mr. Huber said he would like to alert people to the need for a grant to research these things that still aren't understood. He thought that would happen with the CAPE study.

Ms. LaBranche said she would be happy to try to facilitate a meeting with the CAPE researchers that are still around. She said looking forward she is still waiting on an approval for another grant from NOAA to do some outreach. Chair Ingram asked her to come back at the July meeting and talk to them after she meets with the CAPE members. Ms. LaBranche said she would, and that she will send out the link to the RBC website and send a pdf of a sample report for the Committee to see what to expect. Chair Ingram said their next meeting would be July 21. Ms. LaBranche said she would put it in her calendar.

5. River Cleanup – Ginny Raub

Ms. Raub said that through her calculations 6 inches a day for five foot draw down would take until about July 14 or 15. July 15 is the Independence Festival so she was hesitant to do the river cleanup then and cause conflicting events. She met with Jay Perkins and he said this is a muddy event so to wear old clothes. She is still waiting for answers before making a decision on the date. She doesn't envision this be an all-day event. She talked about having eight sites with a coordinator at each site. She doesn't want to go much past July 15 though. Chair Ingram said the draw down will be done by the 15th, so he recommended doing the clean up a few days after that. Mr. Huber asked if there is a need for two cleanups. Mr. Hutchins said no, this is just an opportunity. He is going to scour the banks on July 5 with some interns to look for anything trapped, i.e. crawfish or mussels. He advised they not look so far into this as they don't need eight sites and eight coordinators. He said they should just have one base and make the whole event 1-2 hours. He suggested they pick a date on a weekend.

6. River Ceremony – Lionel Ingram

Chair Ingram said he would like to do something to thank everyone involved in the dam removal, like DPW, State of NH, and NOAA. He said the date could wait until most or all of the dam is out. He said it will most likely be out in September.

Mr. Ferraro said after the draw down is done and they start physically taking the dam out they could have a ceremonial beginning of removal.

Chair Ingram asked how they could present this in terms of the BOS. Julie Gilman said the BOS should take on this project. She proposed a ribbon cutting at the beginning of removal and a ribbon restoration at the end. Chair Ingram said they would leave this to the BOS to make a decision.

Mr. Huber asked about the native celebration. Chair Ingram said this is a private celebration. Mr. Huber said they want to make sure they don't step on their toes. Ms. Gilman said NH doesn't recognize tribal organizations, so they are often left out.

Ms. Gilman said she is the representative of the Heritage Commission for the most part. She said they remain frustrated at the little information they get as a consulting party. She said the only reason they know about the delay or lack of funding is because she is a Selectwoman. She said that information should have been distributed to Heritage. She wants to go over the MOA between the Department of Historical Resources and the Army Corp of Engineers. She talked about preserving headworks or modifying to do so. She said the Town is supposed to

submit to DHR the plans when they are at 90% completion and so if they are ready to go they must be at 100%. She asked the Committee for any comments. Chair Ingram suggested she check with Mr. Vlasich on this, as he assumed she and Mr. Vlasich were in communications. Ms. Gilman said she has tried to contact him. Mr. Hutchins spoke to confirm on this, saying the plans for VHB that Mr. Vlasich ordered for the construction contract say "Headworks to remain. Seal openings of pen stock with reinforced concrete."

7. Public Business

Chair Ingram said he has to get together with Mr. Dean to make sure they are involved in the C-RiSe meetings and to make sure the Committee can participate. He also has to get together with Mr. Vlasich and get a website update similar to the sidewalk project to keep the public informed about the dam. He also needs to email Ms. LaBranche with a list of the Committee members and call and discuss with Mr. Dean the issue coordinated with 106.

Chair Ingram said they have talked about the LOMAR a lot and asked if someone would like to take that up and see where they stand with that then report back. Ms. Raub asked what the LOMAR is. Mr. Hutchins said it is a Letter of Map Revision. He said it is under FEMA regulations that if you have a flood insurance program within your town, infrastructure changes that change the flood plain mapping must be updated to be consistent with what those changes are. He said it is a municipal response.

Chair Ingram asked for any volunteers to deal with this. Mr. Hutchins suggested they ask the DPW.

Mr. Ferraro said at the BRC there was discussion about the LOMAR when the dam comes out. He didn't remember if they approved it but they could go back to Mr. Dean or Mr. Vlasich about that.

8. Public Comment

None.

9. Adjourn the Meeting

Chair Ingram said they would meet again on July 21 at 9 am.

Mr. Hutchins said they should think about keeping parts of the dam for people if they request to keep that section.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:48 am.

Respectively submitted,
Nicole Piper, Recording Secretary

