

River Advisory Committee

August 16, 2017

1. Convene the meeting

Chairman Lionel Ingram convened the meeting at 9:05 am in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office building. Other members present: Richard Huber, Rod Bourdon, Virginia Raub, Natural Resource Planner Kristen Murphy and DPW representative Paul Vlasich. Guest: Jill Robinson from PEA

2. Approval of minutes of June meeting

Mr. Huber asked that his statement on budget monies of Heritage Commission be clarified to reflect his questioning if there were funds available to acquire additional materials for the Section 106 archives and when might be the best time to determine the availability of such funds.

With no other changes Mr. Huber moved to accept the minutes with changes; second by Mr. Bourdon. Motion carried.

3. Updates on Various River Related Items

A. Fish passage and river bottom conditions.

Committee members received an email from Eric Hutchins of NOAA earlier in the morning providing an update on fish passage at former Dam site. Mr. Vlasich read Mr. Hutchins memo noting there is evidence the river herring did make it over the falls this past spring. But he and fellow fish passage engineers from various agencies feel with minor modifications to a few of the boulders and to the bedrock on river bottom the efficiency of the fish passage at this site would be enhanced.

Presently, there is an effort to have the Dam contractor, Sumco, perform the field work this summer when the river flow is low. Mr. Hutchins would like to meet with the Committee this fall to give a detailed briefing on fish passage observations of this past spring and what minor tweaks to the site were completed.

B. FEMA analysis

The consultant, VHB has completed the analysis for possible changes to the Town's flood map. The data is currently being reviewed internally before being set on to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for their review. When received, FEMA has 90 days to comment or approve. If there are comments/questions the analysis will go back to VHB for adjustments. When approved, FEMA will issue a Letter of Final Determination to the Town stating the new or updated Federal Insurance Rate Map; does not become effective until 6 months following the receipt of that notice.

The Town will then notify all affected parcel-owners of the updates; but to date no time has been set for a public meeting. Mr. Vlasich felt it won't be until end of year before any final determination is set. Mr. Bourdon asked how insurance companies learn of any changes. Mr. Vlasich thought it would most likely be the property owners' responsibility to notify the companies of any changes.

C. Pickpocket Dam analysis

At June meeting Mr. Vlasich spoke of the breach analysis being done on the Pickpocket Dam and the need to verify elevations of various structures downstream before submitting to DES. He anticipates that survey work will most likely begin this month or next.

D. Cultural Resources of Section 106 stipulations as required with Dam removal in a Historic District

The design and color of the outdoor sign is complete and submitted to Heritage Commission for their review and comments. There was some discussion on wording but when finalized will be ready to order.

VHB designed an etched glass panel for display inside the library, two areas for viewing were proposed. Again, Heritage Commission will review and give their preference.

Also an interpretive display of posters and graphics has been outlined for inside of library as well as the placement of eight to ten photos going up the stairway; choice of photos will be up to Heritage Commission.

The projects meet the Section 106 requirements as agreed between all involved agencies.

4. The State's Response to the Sea Level Rise Issue

Mr. Ingram referenced a copy of an article appearing in NH Senator David Watters' newsletter. Sen. Watters' wrote on a bill he cosponsored with others that responded to the final report of the Coastal Risk and Hazards Commission "Preparing NH for Projected Storm Surge, Sea-Level Rise and Extreme Precipitation" calling for legislation to reduce coastal vulnerability and to adapt for future hazards. To Mr. Ingram, it appeared this legislation might permit some tax relief to coastal properties subject to storm surge, sea-level rise and extreme precipitation.

The Chair intended to ask Ms. Julie LaBranche of the Rockingham Planning Commission and Selectman representative Clement what they could tell us about legislation SB 185 and the Town's response to this bill. The schedules for Ms. LaBranche and Mr. Clement prevented them from attending this meeting.

When asked, Mr. Vlasich was not aware of any action being taken by the Town but did take the opportunity to speak of other grant work Ms. LaBranche and RPC was doing along with Waterstone Engineering on the Lincoln Street Watershed area. He anticipates that work will result in design/improvements or suggestions to capture nutrients and control stormwater flow in that area. He also cited the SAIL grant submitted by Town Planner and thought perhaps these projects might be relevant to bill.

Mr. Ingram asked to table any further discussion until he had an opportunity to confer with Mr. Clement and Ms. LaBranche.

Mr. Huber wished to add he felt Sen. Watters' letter was an excellent summary of the work and final report of the Coastal Risk and Hazards Commission. That report is available in Town library or viewed at www.nhcrhc.org. Recently Sen. Watters and Rep. Carol Shea Porter hosted a showing of the film "Tidewater" at the Discovery Center. The subject for the documentary was the naval base at Norfolk, VA and documents some of the present effects climate change is having on the base. The effectiveness of this facility is being compromised by the land settling and the ocean's rising. Mr. Huber did attend the showing and felt it was a realistic presentation of the existing conditions brought upon as the result of climate change that need to be addressed now.

5. Committee Personnel Matters

Although the Academy's representative was unable to attend this meeting, Mr. Ingram acknowledged the fine work and service of Roger Wakeman to this Committee for a number of years. He confirmed Mr. Wakeman is leaving Exeter to assume a position at Hamilton College in upstate New York. Ms. Jill Robinson will be the Academy's representative to the River Advisory Committee. Ms. Robinson was in the audience and the Chair invited her to introduce herself and tell some of her interests. Ms. Robinson stated her position at PEA is Senior Manager for Sustainability and Natural Resources. Before going to the Academy she was with the Rockingham Planning Commission and did work with Exeter and other neighboring towns on planning issues including some of the projects that were mentioned at this meeting. She added she has a legal background as well.

In her position, she manages their trail network and is monitoring the trails for any effect or impacts now that the dam is removed i.e. flooding, invasive species. She and Mr. Wakeman worked closely on the navigability and hazards of the Exeter River. She recently paddled the River with Ms. Murphy, Eric Hutchins and others observing and doing an assessment of such. A river run could possibly be repeated in fall with PEA students and get them involved in monitoring. She re-iterated the Academy is very interested working with the Town on planning and the natural resource issues. Mr. Ingram welcomed her and invited her to join the members at the table. For today, she will not be a voting member.

Mr. Ingram stated after thirteen years as Chair of this committee, he felt it was time to step down although he wished to remain a member, just not Chairman. With limited discussion, Mr. Bourdon nominated Mr. Huber; seconded by Ms. Raub. Mr. Huber did accept the nomination. With no other nominations and a quorum of the members present Mr. Huber received a unanimous vote for Chairman. Mr. Ingram continued to preside over the remainder of meeting.

6. Other Business

Discussion was held on various river related topics as outlined in the draft of Master Plan currently being updated.

The date for next meeting will be **Thursday September 21, 2017 at 9:00 am.**

With no further business, meeting was adjourned at 9:49 am.

Respectfully submitted

Virginia Raub
Recording secretary