

River Advisory Committee

February 15, 2018

1. Convene the Meeting

Chairman Richard Huber convened the meeting at 3:04 pm in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office building. Other members present: Rod Bourdon, Jill Robinson, Virginia Raub and Selectman representative Don Clement.

2. Approval of minutes of January 18, 2018 meeting

With a quorum of members present, the Chair asked for approval of January meeting minutes. Mr. Huber outlined suggested revisions to the text and passed them on to the recording secretary for inclusion in final minutes of that meeting. With no other comments, members approved unanimously to accept the January minutes with corrections.

3. Update on River Related Issues

Paul Vlasich, Town Engineer, was not in attendance but did convey to the Chair he had no updates on River related items.

4. Discussion of the State of Our Estuaries 2018 report by the Piscataqua Region estuaries Partnership (PREP)

As stated at the January meeting, Mr. Huber did attend the PREP meeting in December when the 2018 report was presented. Mr. Huber contacted PREP and asked if they would come to our meeting and speak on the report and their findings. They replied that they would not be able to accept our invite at this time as they were still evaluating how to best disperse their findings. They did say they were planning to add a “most frequently asked questions” to the menu on their website and possibly create a video pertinent to the report. The next report will be forthcoming in 2020. But did say if there were any questions at this time to forward them to the PREP group and they would respond.

Mr. Huber attended the recent Exeter Community Open House on Climate, Adaptation and Resilience at the Exeter Town Hall. There he obtained a pamphlet that capsulated the 2015 PREP report. He noted it took all the towns in the watershed and made comparisons amongst the towns on various water quality issues i.e. the percentage of impervious surfaces found in the eleven towns. He found it most interesting and helpful and inquired of PREP if such a brochure is or would be available with the 2018 data. They replied there were no plans to publish a similar condensed report but working on how to release information on annual basis

Mr. Clement shared the Chair’s view that the report contained excellent information on a number of issues all related to the health of the aquatic ecosystem of the Great Bay. But he added the data from the 2015 report has changed as several towns have taken measures to reduce the nitrogen entering into Great Bay.

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Continuing on with the PREP reports Mr. Huber noted there were similar reports prepared using the same graphs and data but for the municipalities and what they could do to address these issues and one for citizens with again, recommendations for individual action on these topics.

Mr. Huber then posed the question what is a future role of the River Committee in relation to the items outlined in the PREP report. Although PREP was not prepared to come before the group he would pass on any questions or concerns of the committee.

Ms. Raub stated she would like to know what method they used to arrive at the calculations for impervious surfaces; is data collection ongoing or complied at the end of a 2-3 year period. The Chair felt perhaps we should corral the questions, perhaps not at this meeting, but at the March meeting to pass on to PREP.

Continuing on whom to best address the issues raised in the PREP report, Mr. Clement felt many of the water quality issues are addressed in the recently completed Town of Exeter 2018 Master Plan. The Plan does list specifics but we can always make comparisons between both plans to ensure the quality and quantity of waters entering the Exeter River is the result of community actions.

Ms. Raub reported on action taken by the Conservation Commission at their February meeting that adds to the protection of the Squamscott River. The Commission voted to move forward with an acquisition for the Town of a 4 .84 acre of land on the Newfields Road. Jennifer and Dan Cole are donating this back portion of their property that is separated by the railroad tracks that run parallel with the River. With this acquisition, land along the Squamscott River will be protected from Route 101 up to the Newfields/Exeter town line.

5. Discussion of the Town of Exeter Master Plan as it relates to the River Advisory Committee.

Members were sent the link to view the final draft of the 2018 Master Plan for review at this meeting and add comments specifically applicable for action by the River committee. Mr. Nate Kelly of the consulting firm of Horsley Whitten Group presented the plan at a work session of the Planning Board at their February 08, 2018 meeting. Because of other outstanding agenda items, they did not take the formal action of acceptance at that time. It appears on the agenda for acceptance at their February 21, 2018 meeting.

The Chair outlined the format of the Master Plan and noted in the **Snapshot** section of report, the dam and its removal was mentioned but nothing of the efforts to preserve the history of the dam with the projects to fulfill the Section 106 requirements presently being prepared for display in the library and the Exeter Historical Society.

Mr. Huber asked the group to review the plan for tasks/ topics that the River Advisory Committee should be included in the document. Mr. Clement suggested the group focus on the **Action Agenda** chapter of the Plan and the six subdivisions: **Support, Prepare, Steward, Grow, Connect and Communicate**. The tasks/actions are put forth in a table with a **Town Lead** designated to oversee the action, a column for **Town Support** with the committees, boards and departments listed that will oversee and carry out the tasks. And lastly the **Time Frame** column assigns a completion date; short term, midterm and long term. Long term action concludes at the end of 2025 or the task is an ongoing endeavor.

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In reviewing and discussing the topics in this Chapter, the Committee felt the River Advisory Committee should be added to three of the **Town Support** tasks.

- **Town Support** of subdivision **Support** item 7: *Develop a public awareness campaign to educate residents and businesses about water quality and state and federal mandates that require the town to improve and monitor it. Include such topics as: what the mandates require the Town to do (new projects, infrastructure project, etc.), the impact of lower water quality on the quality of life in Exeter, and how residents and businesses can contribute to improving water quality.*
- **Town Support** of subdivision **Prepare**, item 2a; *Based on most recent data available, inventory properties most vulnerable to sea level rise, storm surge, and other natural hazards. Where possible, estimate the time horizons for impacts. Develop outreach methods to educate private property owners about the risks and ways they can minimize impacts to their properties.*
- **Town Support** of subdivision **Connect** item 3; *Working with private and public landowners, evaluate the feasibility of a pedestrian walkway/access along the Squamscott River from Swasey Parkway to the Library.*

Because the Planning Board has to date not accepted the Master Plan, the Chair will send a notice of the Committee's recommendations for the River Committee's inclusion in those items to Dave Sharples, Town Planner, and to Langdon Plummer, Chairman of the Planning Board.

While discussing the **Communicate** subsection, and how to best to generate awareness and promote involvement, Ms. Robinson spoke of a recent study that found the most effective way to communicate environmental information is through film. It is a medium that relates to all age groups. Perhaps to raise public awareness, a film could be made to document the historical changes to the Exeter River and to environmental issues.

Mr. Clement stated the Town was fortunate to have the talent and expertise of Bob Glowacky in the IT Department and Cable TV to implement such projects. Mr. Clement felt it was an excellent idea and suggested having Mr. Glowacky come to the meeting, listen to what we would like and let him make suggestions on how to support the message.

Mr. Glowacky was in the control room and came out to join in the discussion. He spoke on some of the videos he has done and that he is presently working a longer documentary on the Dam removal. It will look at the history, why the removal and the resulting effects. He spoke of engaging those that worked on the project, residents and other citizens wanting to get information on the process. Format and venue for film were discussed and for the River Committee to promote the future event was certainly welcomed.

Before leaving discussion of the Master Plan, Mr. Clement asked if there were any items missing in the **Action Agenda**. Ms. Raub asked who would be overseeing the actions and results of such actions at the end of a certain time period. Mr. Clement, although not having examined the document for such, assumed it would be those listed in **Town Lead**. Perhaps this was what was missing. It is nice to have an evaluation but is that a deliverable; having something concrete for that action item. Ms. Raub stated she would like to see the "big picture" at the end of 4 years; how has this made the Town a different

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place. Mr. Clement agreed that maybe a report card, a PREP style report, was needed. He would discuss something all these lines with Board of Selectmen and Planning Board.

6. Other Business

Mr. Huber reported he attended the Community Open House on Climate Change, Adaption and Resilience held at the Town Hall on February 6, 2018 and saw the poster exhibit entitled Exeter Water Trail prepared by the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC). Ms. Julie LaBranche from the RPC was there and she agreed to come to the March meeting of the Committee to tell the group more about the project.

Mr. Clement spoke of an upcoming DES meeting on the Target Fish Community Study program. This study is one piece of the upcoming instream flow rules for designated NH rivers. Each river is unique and will have its own specific set of rules. He will forward the meeting notice with the details to the Chair to pass on to the committee members.

Next meeting will be Thursday, March 15, 2018 at 3:00 pm

With no further business, Mr. Bourdon motioned to adjourn; seconded by Ms. Robinson.

Meeting adjourned at 4:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Raub