

Exeter River Advisory Committee Draft Minutes March 21, 2019

Town of Exeter, N.H.  
River Advisory Committee  
Nowak Room  
March 21, 2019  
Minutes

1. Convene the Meeting

Chairman Huber convened the meeting at 9:00 am on Thursday, March 21, 2019. Members present included Richard Huber, Chair; Lionel Ingram; Virginia Raub, Conservation Representative; Warren Biggins, Philips Exeter Academy Representative; Kathy Corson, Select Board. Absent from the meeting were Terrie Harman, Dan Jones and Rod Bourbon. Chairman Huber welcomed both Mr. Biggins and Ms. Corson as new members to the Committee.

2. Minutes from February 21, 2019 meeting

Chairman Huber commented on word order in Line 37 that noted a Power Point presentation showing a nutrient reduction plan recorded as "Lincoln Street 1 and 2 phases" should be corrected to read [Lincoln Street] "Phases 1 and 2" for clarity (37). Ms. Corson noted misspelling of the term "roll" at Line 82 as a typographical or spelling error for the term "roll," as in "roll out the project" for water trail signage (82). Further discussion surrounded the recorded meeting time change from 3:00 to 9:00 as duly noted. Chairman Huber requested a motion. Ms. Raub moved to approve the Minutes. Mr. Ingram seconded the motion. Mr. Huber and Ms. Raub voted "Aye," while the remaining three Members abstained. The Motion carried in favor of approving the Minutes with noted changes.

3. Update on Various River Advisory Committee (RAC) Related Items

Paul Vlasich, Town Engineer was present among the audience to address most topics. Mr. Vlasich first addressed the Pickpocket Dam at the Exeter River project, stating that Town voted to expend \$40,000 to update the breach analysis from two years ago. This action serves to concentrate on task recommendations from the Dam Bureau a couple of years ago. While further clarification is needed from them, there is no change from the determination that the Pickpocket Dam is in a high hazard condition. Mr. Vlasich noted that the breach analysis and other involved data are viewable at the RAC webpage.

Second, Mr. Vlasich requested the generation of an action plan in the event of emergency. He stated that there is no present indication the dam presents a failure mode; however, if for example, the dam broke in connection with a 100-year storm event the impact to downstream structures provides concern. While explaining the condition that the project remains unfunded, Mr. Vlasich continued relating that the Dam Bureau would like to see results from another hydraulic analysis at a 400-year event,

including increased flows from a 200-year storm event including various criteria. Given these analyses, if the dam should not perform, then the Town must look to solve the potential problem by either a retro-fit of the dam or by removal as with the Great Dam. Mr. Vlasich mentioned that according to recommendations by consultants, \$400,000 in a CIP was funded, but two tasks were funded at \$40,000 toward an overall effort the Town is required to meet. Mr. Vlasich noted a draft of a letter the Town received which outlined areas viewed as deficiencies, but not yet requirements and mentioned the four-step plan surrounding storm-event analysis. Discussion ensued in which Mr. Huber asked, based upon the Town's experience with the Great Dam, would the Committee's role include hosting a public meeting one year from now? Mr. Vlasich responded that the task of storm analysis must occur first, but yes, at one year the earliest, the Committee's role (Task #4) would involve hosting public meetings. Mr. Ingram asked the [hypothetical] question should future analyses meet 200-year storm event success then the Town would not complete Step 4. Mr. Vlasich stated that it would probably not be needed. Mr. Ingram stated that the advantage to this scenario prevailed because there is area to expand the dam. Mr. Vlasich replied that the potential for increasing the spillway capacities was [proposed] in the CIP last year and will remain in future discussions.

Third, Mr. Vlasich addressed the plan for nitrogen control and funding sent to the EPA in 2018 and their response. Mr. Vlasich noted that the Nitrogen Control Plan was posted on the website, but not at the RAC webpage. In summary, Mr. Vlasich related that the EPA agreed with many items in the plan and requested additional information:

- a. Technical equations [in use] were debated regarding the use for impervious mapping and other related engineering considerations of the mapping tool. The overall result was that low estimates were seen. They propose (NHDES) to standardize calculations using mapping for nitrogen to a common parameter, perhaps by the end of the year.
- b. Regarding the rules for handling storm-water, new development and retro-development planning are asked to project the amount of nitrogen expected to be removed. Ms. Corson asked if this request is "with our changes." Mr. Vlasich agreed regarding pollution.
- c. A larger item focused on what other listed communities were planning with an emphasis examining the nitrogen control plan as water ultimately ends in Great Bay and construction of a new treatment facility optimizing the Engineer's recommendations:
  - i. Study the amount of nitrogen removed and its potential effect upon Great Bay.
  - ii. Study best management practices removing pollutants from stormwater.
  - iii. If not acceptable, (as compared to the success / effect all communities have) may have to upgrade the system again.

In conclusion, the EPA says that the Town's plan is vague. Town response states the aim to meet current regulations, then see about future requirements. The EPA seeks a

future plan, now; the Town wants to assess quality first, to understand the accomplished degree of improvement. Discussion surrounded non-point discharge and point discharge nitrogen levels. Don Clement noted that while the plan appears vague per the EPA and DES in which they request measurements, they do not provide specific parameters or indicators for improvement as a threshold. Mr. Clement stated a need for better data and information of criteria for low water quality. Chairman Huber asked for a specific role for the Committee's role to provide a forum. Mr. Vlasich replied not at this time but suggested a review of the reports may reveal an item of interest for the Committee to act on.

#### 4. Election Results

Chairman Huber noted that the Town of Exeter voted in favor of every Warrant Article except the tax cap highlighting Library and Middle School funding. Chairman Huber stated that \$40,000 was appropriated for the Pickpocket Dam project for which the RAC would be needed to hold public meetings in the following year. Chairman Huber sought action and agenda item ideas for the next month's meeting. Mr. Ingram welcomed again new members Warren Biggins and Kathy Corson. Mr. Biggins comes as a representative from Philips Exeter Academy, a welcome affiliate to RAC considerations. Ms. Corson comes from the Planning Board and Select Board providing rounded experience. A Member pointed to Lionel Ingram and Don Clement as their best resource of information about the committee given their combined experience and knowledge.

#### 5. Update on Proposed River Viewing Site near String Bridge

Mr. Glowacky was to provide an update, but since he had left the room, it was reported that his videography showcasing the important return of the Alewife fish at this site near the String Bridge raised the interest of many. Mr. Glowacky lobbied for fortification of this corner area to include a viewing platform so that residents might safely enjoy the experience. The question of whether the property was owned by the Town was resolved; however, the project remains in a limbo state awaiting further action as to the cost among other factors.

#### 6. Notice of Vacancies in the Membership of the River Advisory Committee of Exeter

Chairman Huber announced a remaining Committee seat slated for the Water / Sewer Advisory Committee remains vacant and expressed a need to solicit someone from that committee.

#### 7. Other Business

Mr. Clement spoke to the recent water main breach – a pipe behind Water St broke – that spilled greater than 1 million gallons of raw sewage into the Squamscott River. Mr. Clement thanked the hard-working staff and private contractors who labored and dug

throughout the sleety cold weather to repair the main. Yet, the troubling event [foreshadowed] future occurrences, this being the third in one year. Mr. Clement addressed the recent contract awarded to repair the main pipe from the Swasey Parkway to the plant but focused attention to the potential for repeat breaches in other areas citing protection of the waterways as the major concern. Mr. Clement made two requests:

- A. Discuss and recommend a contingency plan to avoid future breaches and protect the riverways from raw sewage spillage, noting the smelt and alewife runs that will occur in 2 months.
- B. Commentary regarding combined sewer overflow (CSO) that occurs in wet weather events as water inflow combines with waste water bringing an over-capacity situation to the drainage system. Mr. Clement suggested immediate correction since the wastewater gets sent to Clemson Pond then through a tidal gate to the Squamscott River on its way to Great Bay. He seeks to manage the nitrogen, suspended solids and wastewater by eliminating Clemson Pond as the receptacle and find a way to treat the run-off. Mr. Ingram suggested construction of a buffer dam would help, but not stop the majority. He requested that Mr. Clement put something together to use as a basis for discussion. Mr. Clement agreed to do so.

Further discussion involved the lack of a representative from the Water Sewer Advisory Committee (WSAC) as related to the above and all other issues. Mr. Ingram felt ill-at-ease providing recommendations without their input and expertise and expressed a desire to work in conjunction with them and their recommendations. Ms. Corson suggested scheduling a joint-meeting of the Committee and WSAC. Ms. Corson agreed to contact Molly Cowen while Chairman Huber agreed to reach out to the WSAC to schedule and invite someone to a joint meeting.

A Member inquired as to where one would find a history of Clemson Pond. The response relayed that the information lay deep in an archive that showed it was originally a part of the Mill, then used by the Town and is permitted by the State for its present use but should be resolved per State preference. It was suggested that [water] could be diverted to an old treatment plant first.

Kristin Murphy, Natural Resource Planner made the following announcements:

- a. Requests for volunteers sent out via Facebook for VRAP Program volunteers to test the water quality along the Exeter and Squamscott rivers. The opportunity involves two hours per week at a preset location, assisting by removing a bucketful of water from the river for an expert to test and evaluate. Participate by calling 603-418-6452 or by email at: [kmurphy@exeternh.gov](mailto:kmurphy@exeternh.gov).
- b. Provided information for an annual program facilitated by and through the Great American Rain Barrel Co offering rain barrels for purchase at a reasonable cost. Those interested reap and provide the benefits of reduced storm water release

across their lawns into the drainage system and gain the resource as beneficial cost saving for recycled watering of their lawns. An event is planned May 11 from 9:30 – 11:30; see website for details.

- c. The Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREP) assists communities surrounding Great Bay by providing public education synthesizing information regarding the health of Great Bay and public values of aesthetics, activities like fishing, hiking and especially the importance of protecting our natural spaces. With commitment given especially to cleaning up after dogs, participants can snap a QR code from variously located trail heads and the Town receives dollar benefits for each to benefit the nitrogen control program.

Discussion involved a suggestion by Ms. Corson to include PEA as allocation for this program incentive as the field is full of dog waste. It would be PEA's responsibility to approach PREP with the idea. Chairman Huber thought to invite a member of that group to attend a meeting. The rain barrel program was discussed and revealed the approximate cost for a rain barrel was \$75 for a 65-gallon barrel. Ms. Murphy stated that discounts were not available this year; however, the cost savings for watering lawns or washing vehicles as compared to paying for water makes a significant difference in addition to the benefit of using recycled water. Ms. Corson congratulated Ms. Murphy on the work she accomplished for the fertilization program, recognizing the difficulty of creating a new definition and her hard work.

#### 8. Public Comment

Mr. Ingram commented about the tasks given in the RAC Master Plan and suggested they review them carefully to ensure the Committee is effectively serving the public.

The time and date for the next meeting was reviewed and set for 10:00 a.m. on Thursday April 18, 2019.

9. Chairman Huber called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Ingram moved to adjourn at 10:30 a.m. Ms. Raub seconded the motion. The Motion carried with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

*Celeste M. Camire*  
Recording Secretary