

Town of Exeter, N.H.
River Advisory Committee
Wheelwright Room
April 18, 2019
Final Minutes

1. Convene the Meeting

Chairman Huber convened the meeting at 10:00 on Thursday, April 18, 2019. Members present included Richard Huber, Chair; Kristen Osterwood, Virginia Raub, Warren Biggins, Rod Bourdon, Daniel Jones, Terrie Harman and Kristen Murphy. Members absent included Paul Vlasich.

2. Minutes of March 21, 2019 meeting

Chairman Huber noted that a correction of a comment in the previous Minutes was made by him, regarding Line 37, and not as attributed to Mr. Ingram. Chairman Huber tabled further discussion until the end of the meeting.

3. Update

Due to Paul Vlasich's absence, an update on various River items was tabled for a later date.

4. Discussion of Collaboration with the Water / Sewer Advisory Committee (W/SAC)

Bob Kelly, Water / Sewer Advisory Committee Representative, requested the Chairman to present any questions he wished to be addressed. Chairman Huber presented the RAC focus on nitrogen levels affecting the river and Great Bay in combination with concern for the recent event of a ruptured major sewer line that released 1 million gallons of untreated water as a significant event worthy of the Committee's consideration for a solution. Given the existence of the W/SAC, Mr. Chairman wished to collaborate efforts with them to provide the best strategy to mitigate the risks for recommendation to the Select Board.

Don Clement, former Select Board representative and audience member suggested the Committee treat the nitrogen issue and the raw sewage issue as separate discussions because they are entirely different items. He suggested the raw sewage issue as the priority. Mr. Chairman replied that while nitrogen levels had been the focus, because of what happened they wanted to understand the effect and work with people to understand it better. In the meantime, he said, \$3 million was set aside to replace this line and \$200 thousand was allocated to protect from similar incidents.

Bob Kelly, visiting Chairman of the W/SAC stated that the Department was in a good leadership position with qualified and experienced personnel. Mr. Kelly referenced information submitted to the Chairman indicating the recent break as two events that impacted the river system. The first, a sanitary sewer overflow that resulted in 700 thousand gallons of combined rainwater and sewage and a second event that resulted in 400 thousand gallons of sewage (a little over 1 million gallons in combined events) recently impacted the Town. Mr. Kelly noted that the 300-

year-old community strove to replace 50-year-old infrastructure. Plans set on a priority basis were met by an event that preceded the planned repair or maintenance. Mr. Kelly continued, noting recent projects and the \$1-2 million allocated annually to proactively improve a system that included old-style relief valves, especially near a river: early 20th Century planning reasoned that due to health concerns, over- or back-flow to a water source was preferable to allowance of water flow to the streets.

Mr. Kelly next addressed Chairman Huber's inquiry about Clemson Pond by explaining that the pond was designed as a combined sewer over-flow pond. When there is a rainfall event and there is drainage combined with the sewage, it flows into Clemson Pond. In theory, the solids settle out and the overflow water goes to the river as an improvement to allowing all to flow directly into the river. Further, he stated, that an appropriate approach would be to eliminate Clemson Pond or at least re-design [it] to allow for treatment or to reduce infiltration but plans to this end are delayed due to budgeting. Bob Kelly next addressed Virginia (Ginny) Raub's comment about the Town working to disconnect some drainage pipes saying the Town's decision to correct problem pipes in the surrounding area serve to decrease the impact of overflow to Clemson Pond. He added that a plan to "fix" Clemson Pond may be unnecessary because of the repaired infrastructure in the surrounding area as things will start to stabilize. Mr. Huber commented that the advantage of a representative from the Water / Sewer Advisory Committee (W/SAC) would hope to inform each other of progress and awareness of the issues. Mr. Kelly agreed that that would be worthwhile. Mr. Kelly concluded stating that decisions were made, electing to make "top of the pipe changes" vs. "bottom of the pipe" solutions because they are more effective. Clemson Pond equaled an expensive challenge and the Town opted to fix overflow structures to reduce infiltration and work at Clemson Pond may not be required. There is hope that the new water treatment plant along with 20 years of fixes, things will start to stabilize and emphasized that the \$200 thousand by-pass should help with or eliminate problems.

Chairman Huber noted that with the advent of a representative from the W/SAC to the RAC there is hope both would inform each other of progress and awareness of issues. Mr. Kelly agreed.

Don Clement, who spoke as a Representative from the Exeter-Squamscott River Local Advisory Committee made several notations related to combined sewer overflow (CSO,) meaning both sanitary and combined sewage, and the eventual (diluted) sewage entering the Squamscott River:

- a. State mandates elimination of combined sewage overflows since 2010
- b. In 2001, the State mandated elimination of the Great Dam and it took 15 years noting as always, the question of money [to fund the project.]
- c. Would like to see a more active plan for solutions to manage the CSO's so that not even diluted sewage water flows to the river. Placed as a significant issue to be addressed and not placed "at the back" of the plans.

Chairman Huber added that the Committee must stay on top of the issue and keep everyone informed.

Mr. Kelly stated that the W/SAC role has changed over the years. Once they had worked with the Select Board and oversaw the Public Works Department (DPW.) Presently, the DPW is

doing a great job and now have people with the technical abilities. Leadership comes from the Select Board and Town Manager [rather than from the W/SAC.] Next, Mr. Kelly addressed Mr. Clement's comments through a review of past plans, lack of funding and an arrangement with the EPA to instead focus on the Waste Water Treatment Plant, allocate money to fix manholes and cross-county lines that might have leaks. This increased the budget some but avoiding spending the [required] \$40 million. Since then, they have reduced what is managed by cross-county lines by 10 per cent. Mr. Kelly stated that sewer rates will come close to doubling next year after having gone up 30-40% over the last two years (to pay for the waste-water treatment plant,) so projects such as Clemson Pond really do have to wait.

Chairman Huber asked for additional comments for the prospect of collaborating with the W/SAC. Virginia Raub (Ginny) stated that there seem to be a lot of projects and grants that do not seem to be coming together in one spot. Mr. Kelly's responded that that would be a function of [unintelligible] and ultimately, we answer to the US EPA and their local curator, DES. He continued stating that 8-10 years ago, a bargain was struck because the Town could not afford \$80 million (cannot really afford \$40 million) and decided to do what was expedient to clean up the river while keeping people's pocketbooks in mind. As a volunteer since the 1980's, Exeter has never shied away from responsibilities as relates to the regulatory agencies. It may take time to complete projects such as the dam and the river, but it's really all a function of finances. There is only so much you can do out of 3500 W/S customers: if we can't afford the tens of millions of dollars than we go for the \$1-2 million always with the goal of moving forward.

Terrie Harman, Committee Member commented to Ms. Raub's points that projects do not all come together and agreed that she is glad that someone from the Sustainability Committee is here because that should be a function.

Don Clement from the audience agreed with Ms. Raub stating that there is great collaboration with all Town entities that have been very good at being able to get State aid and grants. Mr. Clement noted the problem that little [available] Federal money will be less moving forward to help with environmental issues. The little bit of aid that is out there, Exeter has been excellent at obtaining it.

Ms. Raub responded with her thoughts of the Lincoln Street project which was a Rockingham Planning (RPC) project along with NOAA – NOAA provided the funds and RPC provided the coordination. She said that in particular, there seemed to be a lot of action and there was apparently money for the water trail and it was touted at the sustainability meeting over at the Town Hall. Then it just disappeared, and nobody knew anything about it. Mr. Raub had asked Paul Vlasich, but he had been unaware. Mr. Clement responded that since the project is still waiting for completion at Swasey Parkway, it was probably low on Paul's radar but if she were to talk to the RPC. [unclear here] Until that gets done, it doesn't make sense to put in the kiosks. Ms. Raub reiterated that Lincoln Street was the largest watershed in the town and there should be more. [unclear here] Mr. Clement replied that it is a question of money, like Bob said, this was an additional \$700 thousand that the Select Board at the time didn't feel we could put this forward with the \$2 million to finish Lincoln Street. This would have made it a \$3 million

project and they had to determine priorities at the time. (To do everything from Dr. Rosine's presentation two months ago was \$700 thousand.) Bob Kelly noted his statement as correct because the State never had any money and certainly Federal has dried up as by comparison to utilities. For example, offered Mr. Kelly, for 20 years Boston received 90% paid where we get only 10%. He said that the RPC does make efforts on our behalf regarding information flow as Don alluded, if a project is not done or not going anywhere, it is hard to cross-reference things because one may be on a different track. Ms. Raub replied that particular one struck her and wondered how many others had been completed and are out there and have not been put on a wish list... Mr. Kelly said that it might be worthwhile, but Jen and Matt Berube have an extensive list of projects that far exceeds the projects they are going to be doing over the next few years. Mr. Kelly offered to give a "tour" showing over the next 10-20 years all of the projects to the tune in excess of \$50 million ... he said it's all a matter of trying to fit that in.

Terrie Harman supported Mr. Kelly's idea as a good one and felt that a CIP project process is a great way that the RAC could play a role in understanding what projects are proposed through the CIP process. Giving a timeline and being informed about and supporting things as they go through the budget process that are related to the river seems like a natural connection. Chairman Huber and Mr. Kelly agreed that involvement from someone on the RAC would provide the appropriate additional information or report back as things arise and vice versa, the cooperation would be a big milestone later in the Fall when the water treatment plant opens – both sewage discharge to the river and the longer term goal of reducing nitrogen to the river – will go a long way towards helping the RAC mission.

5. Discussion of Collaboration with the Sustainability Office

Representatives from the proposed new Sustainability Office, Robin Tyner and Kristen Osterwood spoke and answered questions. A draft presentation was passed to Committee members while Ms. Tyner explained that the group who researched and promoted a new position for the Town were a group of many volunteers comprised of like-minded people across several Boards concerned about coordinated flow of information who recommended a plan for the Sustainability Office. Ms. Tyner added that Ms. Osterwood draws from her experience from a previous position. Their initial task was set to review the progress, success and failures of other towns and cities in New Hampshire: which March Warrant Articles passed had sustainability lessons or implications; determine the goals, roles and collaboration with advisory boards like RAC and within Town departments; provide a mission statement; and options to implement a position of Sustainability Officer. Ms. Osterwood summarized Ms. Tyner's introduction stating that a group of volunteers wrote the proposed article which passed, to form the Sustainability Office, then assumed the duties proffered by the Select Board, including background research and creation of goals.

Ms. Tyner next discussed the draft as a means to refine their position and mission as they met with the Energy and Conservation committees, the Department of Public Works, and Parks & Recreation in the future. Ms. Tyner referred to a chart that summarized their findings from having met with comparable towns and cities. Ms. Tyner related the common theme was that each wished they had a person to do this [fill the role of Sustainability Officer] who was not a

volunteer or a part-time person. She said in most places, that person began as a volunteer and had become part-time, but desire one full-time person. Many towns have begun the process to making this happen. Ms. Osterwood added that it was determined that having a full-time person allowed for the time and space to attend meetings, de-silo projects and make everything a little more connected. Also, a full-time employee had more time to go after money to help fund projects and the Office itself. At this point, Ms. Osterwood asked for help to determine the correct information for that job description to aid in finding the correct person for the position. Next, Ms. Tyner highlighted the importance of Ms. Osterwood's statement that while there are other sources for money such as grants and rebates, (Moose and UNH interns) they needed someone who knows and can obtain them in a timely manner to meet deadlines.

Chairman Huber commented about the Durham Eversource settlement reported Wednesday April 17 in Foster's, a \$1 million to programs that support the environment and asked Kristen Murphy to comment. Ms. Murphy explained the article as regarding the cross-bay pipeline and its required connection point through Durham at the bottom of Great Bay as a controversial, environmentally sensitive issue. After much deliberation over whether that was the right approach, mitigation resulted that Eversource needed to provide [those monies.]

Ms. Tyner next asked for input from the Committee as to which warrant articles passed in March might provide a linkage to sustainability. Chairman Huber responded that since this is a work-in-progress, the Committee should find a way to collaborate with this new office.

As an interest item, Ms. Tyner mentioned potential tasks and pointed to the comment section of the mission statement. Chairman Huber suggested the event of a public forum for comments once the office is formed as a great way to gather information and get the pros and cons. Ms. Tyner agreed that that was a goal, to have public outreach and communication, share information, tell the good news stories and collaborate. Warren Biggins, PEA, requested clarification of the Warrant Article as passed by the Select Board and its funding. Ms. Tyner replied that the Warrant Article passed as wanted by the citizens of New Hampshire for 2019, but it has not been funded. The process now is to seek a realistic way to make it happen; consideration for the contracted service or an actual position is undetermined. She elaborated upon the benefit of a full-time person to find and follow grant monies for use by the Town but were unsure how to make that happen. Ms. Harman added that the reason was because the group was comprised of volunteers unskilled or knowledgeable at writing warrant articles with the right wording such as "to raise and appropriate \$45 thousand," to make it happen for a long-term basis and now sought not only assistance to do so, but also the right skilled person for the job. From the audience, Kathy Corson, Select Board Representative, commented for clarity that "you, [Ms. Tyner and Ms. Osterwood] are Volunteers, but not Town Volunteers and there is no Town Committee that has been established to do this. Though while the townspeople have spoken, any findings should still be brought before the Select Board for determination of contract services or an actual position."

Ms. Tyner next mentioned eight proposed functions designated in the hand-out but focused on slide 9 which explained recouped investments and paybacks. As an example, UNH was noted to have received \$1 million grant used to fund projects. They worked on the rule that pay back must occur at a maximum three-year interval. Over 5-10 years, it has been sustained by the cost-savings of these projects they are investing in, replenishing their fund.

Ms. Osterwood asked what projects at Phillips Exeter Academy (PEA) are receiving payback. Mr. Biggins replied that he is in the process of learning what's been done. His priority right now is taking a Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory: how much natural gas, electricity and water is used at the campus now and in comparison, to years before. He stated usage is way down. Chairman Huber offered that PEA did geothermal in its entire courtyard and are using that to heat the building as well as solar on the roof. Chairman Huber stated interest in a forthcoming report of its effectiveness. Mr. Biggins responded with the example of solar power that went on-line in January 11, 2018 and produced more than 500,000 kwh of energy in the first year. He continued that there are unknown production and payback costs or pay-back period. At this time everyone is happy with the production. Mr. Biggins also addressed Ms. Tyner's description of what UNH is doing, calling it a "Green Revolving Fund" and that colleges all over the U.S. use as a successful incorporated investment. Further, Mr. Biggins said that he is focused on sharing results from PEA when he has them.

Ms. Tyner described the potential categories or functions for the proposed Sustainability Officer:

- a. As a cross-functional team leader across all departments, public, region and town as a contact or connector.
- b. As a Town Sustainability Initiative Instructor so there is town-wide vision / goal with a proclamation, but also steps to achieve that vision or goal.
- c. To offer a culture of sustainability, community support which is sharing and communicating at public events and forums, getting out the good news of the efforts that are going on in the town.

Ms. Tyner next addressed the possible actions necessary for the position:

- a. Hire a full or part-time person to work under the Town Manager
- b. Use existing personnel within a department or hire contractors
- c. Hire a part-time Sustainability Director under the Town Manager or part-time in one of the departments like Planning or Public Works.

Ms. Osterwood summarized the disadvantages that other towns encountered through use of existing personnel: new duties add to the job description of an already busy schedule; people aligned to another department had problems especially when emergent issues arose within their department; it was important to hold the position as separate because otherwise, because the position was "housed" in a department, no one knew who held the position and in "what" department at any given time. Ms. Osterwood stated that the key was to have a stand-alone, full-time person known throughout all departments who was able to go after grants and funding, adequately answer questions and communicate as a functional criterion. On a final note, Ms. Osterwood said that N.H. and Regional forums regarding sustainability were available only to full-time Sustainability Officers. Volunteers may not attend the forums.

Ms. Corson, Select Board Representative, instigated discussion regarding salary requirement of \$45 thousand for a full-time person noting the figure is not included in the budget for this fiscal year, nor has the Public voted to allow the Select Board to expend that money this year. Ms. Osterwood agreed that it was an arbitrary figure that would likely only cover the salary through the end of this fiscal year with Ms. Tyner interjecting that the voters did request consideration for this year as an emergent issue. It was agreed that the matter remained open for discussion with the Select Board and the purpose here was to work with the RAC for suggestions to promote and formulate the position for on-going and future collaboration.

Ms. Raub asked if there was a plan for a public forum. Ms. Tyner responded that the Sustainability Officer would schedule such a thing. Presently, Volunteers spend 10-15 hours per week – a public forum is too much for volunteer responsibility. Ms. Raub requested additional discussion time to which Ms. Osterwood agreed to be in communication with her.

The definition of “sustainability” was requested. Ms. Osterwood replied that the best way to describe sustainability is “living in a way where our children and their children can live in the same way that we’re living.” She said, the simplest way to look at is: “The life that we have, we would like future generations to have. Right now, we are not doing that. So, it is getting to that level.”

Kristin Murphy, Natural Resource Planner, interjected the importance of defining roles and responsibilities of the Sustainability Office position to avoid it becoming a catch-all for all other non-identified roles. Chairman Huber expressed concern that the position might cause an additional layer of bureaucracy. Ms. Tyner’s response indicated that it should not do so but would instead provide a resource of alternatives to regular practices (such as using brine instead of salt on the sidewalks as an environmentally safe alternative) to make everyone’s jobs easier.

Chairman Huber related information from the Coastal Risks and Hazards Commission and their study on NH coastline survival in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. He stated that legislation resultant from a report on projected storm surge and sea level rise requires review of that scientific work every 5 years regarding climate change with new requirements for building and infrastructure applied retroactively. He stated that it remains unclear whether the guidelines are mandated or suggested, and how to remain proactive, build right and not be overwhelmed by costs. Chairman Huber concluded stating that the Sustainability Office sounds like a similar enterprise. Ms. Tyner explained that where the Sustainability Office is working in New Hampshire cities and towns, it is working in conjunction with boards and committees, but the committees now have a voice in the day to day means. In summary, Ms. Tyner stated that when committees and departments meet with the Sustainability Office, a synergy is created that helps volunteers and helps the town. Chairman Huber observed there is a real consciousness that when a singular issue arises, we should consider consulting with the Sustainability people regarding when it is important and when it is not. Ms. Tyner felt that was a good reason to have a daytime person who knows what other towns are doing especially regarding resources. Chairman Huber

agreed and asked that the Committee read the information provided for discussion at the next RAC meeting scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 16, 2019 in the Nowak Room.

6. Review of the Master Plan as it Reflects the RAC

Chairman Huber provided a document that listed areas specific to the RAC in the Master Plan. Since it was getting late, he requested that the members review the information for discussion later as these actions should be taken seriously as part of their duties.

7. Update on the River Viewing Site

Bab Glowacky provided background information on the topic as an idea he started as a non-resident. On the right side of the String Bridge there is a grassy area that would make a nice little pocket park with a platform where people could view the Alewives [fish that spawn in the river.] Mr. Glowacky hoped that either the Public Works or Parks and Recreation Department could clean up the area and place some infographic signs about the fish and the river. Mr. Glowacky stated that he also spoke as a Brentwood Representative to the Exeter-Squamscott Local River Advisory Committee. In lieu of all the work already done to clean up the river, his idea was received well, specifically with interest for the fish. Further consideration included a determination that the proposed location was in fact Town owned. Further discussion involved Chairman Huber's notation for safety, plans to obtain requirements and quotes to that end and whether the Select Board can expend monies to fund the project, without resolution.

8. Discussion of Minutes from the March 21 Record.

Chairman Huber and Committee Members discussed areas to address to correct and amend the Minutes from the previous month's meeting.

9. Adjourn the Meeting

Chairman Huber requested a motion to close the meeting. Ms. Raub and Mr. Bourdon approved and seconded the motion. There was one abstention. The meeting adjourned at 11:31 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 on Thursday May 16, 2019 in the Nowak Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Celeste M. Camire
Recording Secretary