

River Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, September 17, 2020
3 PM
Remotely via Zoom
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Richard Huber (Chair), Lionel Ingram, Dan Jones, Terrie Harman, Rod Bourdon, Niko Papakonstantis, Select Board Rep, and Paul Vlasich, the Town Engineer.

Members Absent: Carl Wikstrom; Ginny Raub, Conservation Commission Rep.; Warren Biggins, PEA Rep.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Huber at 3 PM.

Mr. Huber read a statement:

As Chair of the River Advisory Committee, I am declaring that an emergency exists and I am invoking the provisions of RSA 91-A2III(b). Federal State and Local Officials have determined that gatherings of 10 or more people pose a substantial risk to our community and its continuing efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19. In concurrence with their determination, I also find that this meeting is imperative to the continued operation of Town Government and services, which are vital to public safety and confidence during this emergency. As such, this meeting will be conducted without a quorum of this body physically present in the same location. At this time, I also welcome members of the public accessing this meeting remotely. Even though this meeting is being conducted in a unique manner in unusual circumstances, the usual rules of conduct and decorum will apply.

Mr. Huber started the meeting by taking a roll call attendance.

2. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular Meeting: May 21, 2020

Mr. Ingram moved that the minutes of May 21, 2020 be accepted as presented. Ms. Harman seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

3. Update on River Issues

Paul Vlasich said in June, he worked with their consultants at VHB on a grant proposal for the FEMA High Hazard Dam Grant. This would have covered technical and planning for the Pickpocket Dam, which following a breach analysis is now classed as a high hazard dam. The total project cost put into the grant was \$450,000; the Federal share would have been 65%. They submitted the preliminary proposal and got the ok for the full grant proposal, which was sent in on June 15th, but on June 29, they heard that they did not get the grant. The lowest points scored were regarding the downstream effects of something happening to the dam, which were not as great as some other high hazard dams in the country.

Mr. Huber asked Mr. Papakonstantis why the town is delaying the study. Mr. Papakonstantis said they're looking at the budget now. There's a capital improvement project for \$3M that will be reviewed by the Budget Recommendations Committee this year.

Mr. Jones said there are two structures at risk, one of which was not placed with permits. Could they rebuy the structures? Mr. Papakonstantis said they will be able to answer that question better when they've heard evidence from the Public Works Department. Mr. Jones said he knows people like to remove dams, but there would be terrific environmental damage from taking this out. He owns 10 acres of wetland that would be destroyed.

Mr. Huber asked Mr. Vlasich if they're still planning a feasibility study. Mr. Vlasich said there is a breach analysis that shows impact on properties downstream, which is posted on the town website. Just purchasing the affected properties would not make the high hazard dam status go away, because Kingston Road will still be affected. The relevant CIP project for FY21 is \$300,000. Combined with last year, they'll have \$400,000 to take them to the end of the feasibility study. Outside of that, they put in some placeholders for design concepts of the Great Dam, and it will be the same process with Pickpocket, except in this case, dam removal will be considered as a potential solution from the beginning, instead of only looking at dam removal at the end.

Mr. Huber asked if they can convince the state agencies to delay the deadlines. Mr. Vlasich said that according to the letter of deficiency, June of 2022 is the deadline to decide what they want to do, and they have until the end of 2025 to implement that plan. Mr. Huber asked when it would be time to involve Brentwood to get their input.

4. Other Business

- a. Mr. Huber said Exeter is suffering a severe drought and the use of water is restricted. Mr. Jones asked if Mr. Vlasich can describe what the effect of the drought has been on riverside wells. Mr. Vlasich said he doesn't have the exact answer. When they removed the dam, there were calculations that the aquifer would recede by 12 or 18%. Mr. Clement said the drought has been significant and prolonged. There was a significant drought in 2016 when they removed the dam. A drought affects not just the surface water level but the groundwater as well. In the Fall of 2016, they started getting some rainfall and the groundwater levels did come up, and the town wells came back up to a good level. The town didn't have a good snowfall over the winter, but he's hoping that things bounce back. The town and DPW are exploring putting in a new well in the Drinkwater Road aquifer.
- b. Mr. Huber said he has a note from Kristin Murphy [the Town Natural Resources Planner] regarding a Climate Resource forum Wednesday October 7 from 3 - 4 PM.

5. Review Committee Calendar

- a. The next meeting is Thursday, November 19, 2020 at 3 PM.

6. Public Comment

- a. Don Clement of 5 Thelma Drive said PEA has made an application to repair the Hill Bridge, which connects the Academy playing fields over the Exeter River. They're also looking to correct and stabilize the bank erosion. They're going before the Exeter Squamscott River Local Advisory Committee on this issue. ERLAC is also working with the DPW and Conservation Commission to distribute DES brochures on septic systems to people in the watershed. Mr. Huber asked if people could come before the River Advisory Committee to address the correct approach to septic issues. Mr. Clement said regarding the PEA project, it will probably go before the Conservation Commission, and River Advisory Committee members are welcome to attend. Mr. Ingram asked if they have any idea of who has a septic system and which are older systems. Mr. Clement said they know who's not on the town system, but not the efficiency of these systems.
- b. The members discussed an issue with the River Advisory Committee page of the town website. Mr. Papakonstantis offered to reach out to IT.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Ingram moved to adjourn. Mr. Bourdon seconded. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 3:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary