

River Advisory Committee Meeting  
Thursday, October 20, 2022  
3 PM  
Town Offices, Nowak Room  
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

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

Members Absent: PEA Rep Warren Biggins

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

1. Approval of Minutes

- a. March 17, 2022
- b. June 16, 2022

Mr. Huber said the June meeting recording didn't work until Mr. Vlasich was presenting, so in the minutes is just the approval of the minutes and the date, with no indication of what happened. He would like to add a comment in the June minutes as to what happened and reapprove the March minutes.

**Mr. Ingram made a motion to approve the March 17, 2022 and June 16, 2022 minutes, with the addition to the June minutes of a note about the issue with the recording. Ms. Harman seconded. Mr. Wikstrom abstained, as he was not present at the March or June meetings. The motion passed 7-0-1.**

2. Update on River Issues

Town Engineer Paul Vlasich gave an update on current projects. The siphon project construction bid and the engineering contract for inspections were approved. The kick-off meeting is next week. We still need to get an easement on the mill side of the river, and Mitchell Group is working on that. We received a \$600,000 Congressional Directed Spending Grant and \$180,000 State ARPA [American Rescue Plan Act] Grant for this project. The project should be complete by May 2023.

Mr. Huber asked Mr. Vlasich to give the details of the siphon project. Mr. Vlasich said there are two sewer siphons across the river. We were running out of capacity, and thought it was time to add an additional siphon barrel, but when we investigated and cleaned the existing siphons, we found holes in them. Rather than keep them, we're looking to remove the existing two siphons and install three new siphons. These siphons move sewage from Jady Hill and Clemson Lagoon through Swasey Parkway and into the main pumping station.

Regarding Pickpocket Dam, we had been waiting for the money to do the analysis. We've now been awarded a \$40,000 Coastal Assistance Grant. We also received a \$100,000 Stormwater Planning Grant; it hasn't been approved by the

Governor & Council, but it has everything other than that, so he thinks the town can proceed. There was a contract signed last week with VHB [Engineering firm Vanasse Hangen Brustlin] for this analysis, at a cost of \$373,385. There were also some leftover funds for the study, around \$45,000, that would also be applied. That leaves a cost of around \$200,000, which will be funded through the town's ARPA funds. The next step is to have a meeting with the Coastal Resilience People and the Stormwater Planning Group with Deb Loiselle. VHB will do a detailed site survey and a bathymetric survey, update the existing conditions plan, and perform a dam inspection. The Parr Corporation, who worked on the dam project, will do the inspection. In the winter, we can do the rainstorm and hydraulics work, and create a plan for sediment sampling that will need approval. In the springtime, they will do the sediment probes and evaluation of sediments. The Coastal Resilience Grant has a short turn-around; the work will have to be completed by June 2023.

Mr. Huber asked when we should involve Brentwood in the findings. Mr. Vlasich said because of the Stormwater Planning Grant, there will be public updates required, which will happen at River Advisory Meetings. In the May/June timeframe, we'll have something to talk about. Brentwood are always invited to these River Advisory meetings.

Mr. Huber asked if the options and costs would be shared with the public. Mr. Vlasich said a few meetings ago, the River Advisory Committee saw the draft contract with the list of options. One alternative is to look at dam stabilization, so that in a flood event the dam would stay there. There were five concepts: dam modification with partial removal, lowering of the spillway, spillway extension, dam reclassification by purchasing affected properties, or dam removal and river restoration.

Mr. Vlasich said that the other high hazard dam is Exeter Reservoir. It also has to pass the same 2.5X the 100 year storm event as Pickpocket. Two decades ago, the DPW did a breach analysis. In the recent VHB contract, we also included an Exeter Reservoir breach analysis, and it doesn't pass. ARPA funding had \$5M put towards high hazard municipal dams. Our project was 100% funded, so we had VHB put in an application to do a similar task as Pickpocket Dam. We won't be looking at dam removal because it's our water supply. We were selected for a \$172,000 grant to figure out how to increase the discharge capacity. We have until December 1<sup>st</sup> to put in the final application.

Mr. Jones said 10 or 20 years ago, there was discussion that a flood event would inundate the water treatment facility. Was there remediation done on that? Mr. Vlasich said there was an upgrade to the sluiceway from the dam down towards the culvert on Portsmouth Ave. However, the required storm event would create a similar situation. The breach analysis found that the water would flow over Portsmouth Ave. Mr. Jones asked if the treatment plant is still under Portsmouth Avenue. Mr. Vlasich said yes. There's some talk in the CIP processes of upgrades of the Water Treatment Plant; if we were to improve it, it would likely not be in that location.

Mr. Vlasich also gave an update on the stormwater project. This is related to nutrients that get into our waterways and Great Bay. The town was awarded a Watershed Assistance grant for \$118,900 and the design portion of that work has begun. The survey work is complete. Prior to the application, we put in a monitoring well to test

soil conditions and monitor groundwater levels so that the appropriate stormwater treatment design could happen. The design should be ready in springtime and we can go out to bid. This is in the area of Kids Park.

Mr. Vlasich said that part of the Great Bay nitrogen general permit was to come up with an adaptive management plan to treat some of the run-off into the rivers, or “non-point source.” It was a 5 year plan and we’re in year 2. Our consultant put in for a grant, and we were awarded \$45,000, but it’s not yet approved by Governor & Council. In this case, we can’t do any tasks to be paid for by the grant until it is approved. Our consultant, Geosyntec, has a contract for \$89,400, so the \$45,000 grant will cover about half.

The adaptive management plan has several components, including fertilizer reduction, stormwater designs, and advanced septic systems. A few years ago the town had a grant to address runoff in the Lincoln Street sub water shed area. Similarly, this project will look at other areas in town to see what retrofits could happen to control nutrients in the drainage system. The town has the makings of a healthy lawn program, and we will work on education and outreach on the proper use of fertilizers. For advanced septic systems, there’s a piece that you can add to a septic system that helps reduce nitrogen leaching into the ground. We looked at how to incentivize installing that piece. One idea is offering homeowners a \$15,000 loan at 0% interest to cover the cost of the system. Mr. Ingram asked what percentage of septic systems is out of date, and Mr. Vlasich said we don’t know. Mr. Wikstrom said he thinks that the advanced septic systems would be a small percentage.

Mr. Mattera asked if the Adaptive Management plan is on the website, and Mr. Vlasich said yes, it was part of the CIP information from last year.

Mr. Mattera asked whether the stormwater design would be looking for priority areas like Lincoln Street. Mr. Vlasich said yes, there would be a review of the top 10 areas and which two are the most attractive for final design.

Mr. Mattera asked if there is a fertilizer outreach requirement under MS4 [the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System permit]. Mr. Vlasich said he doesn’t know. We are planning to do the education kickoff at next year’s Alewife Festival.

Mr. Vlasich said this year’s annual required MS4 report is on the town website. The remaining thing to start is wet weather sampling. It used to be dry weather sampling and we had no contaminants that we had to trace back, but now we must do wet weather sampling after a certain size rainstorm. Lincoln Street is one of the first areas to look at. Now that there’s going to be flow in the catchbasins, we’ll see if any contaminant thresholds are reached. If we find those, we might have to explore where that’s being caused. Mr. Huber asked if this was about nitrogen, and Mr. Vlasich said yes, it’s for coliform bacteria, e coli, total nitrogen, PH, surfactants, conductivity, chlorine, ammonia, temperature, and salinity.

Mr. Huber asked if the committee should meet in November. Mr. Vlasich said he’s not sure if he will be here. Mr. Huber said this year is the least meetings of the River Advisory Committee. Mr. Vlasich asked that he contact him ahead of time to determine whether to postpone. Mr. Ingram said there aren’t as many active river issues. There are some grants we’re waiting on.

Mr. Wikstrom said he was listed in the June minutes as attending, but he was not present.

Mr. Wikstrom asked if we will look at increasing our water capacity at the reservoir when looking at the dam. Mr. Vlasich said we're looking at increasing water supply throughout the town, but not necessarily at the reservoir. That's connected to the Exeter River intake.

3. Other Business

- a. There was no other business considered at this meeting.

4. Public Comment

- a. There was no public comment at this meeting.

5. Adjournment

**Mr. Ingram moved to adjourn. Mr. Jones seconded. The motion passed 8-0 and the meeting adjourned at 3:52 PM.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary