

River Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, March 16, 2023
3 PM
Town Offices, Nowak Room
Final Minutes

1. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Chair Richard Huber, Rod Bourdon, Conservation Commission Rep. Trevor Mattera, Select Board Rep Niko Papakonstantis, PEA Rep Warren Biggins, and Town Engineer Paul Vlasich

Members Absent: Lionel Ingram, Carl Wikstrom, Dan Jones, Terrie Harman

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

1. Approval of Minutes

a. October 20, 2022

MOTION: Mr. Papakonstantis moved to approve the minutes of October 20, 2022 as presented. Mr. Mattera seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

2. Update on River Issues

Town Engineer Paul Vlasich presented the Committee with a timeline for Pickpocket Dam. He said the town has a contract with a consultant to do the feasibility study, and we have a tentative schedule. We received a Coastal Resilience Grant of \$40,000 and a Clean Water SRF [State Revolving Fund] Grant for \$100,000. We're requesting an extension for the Coastal Resilience Grant from June 2023 to December 2023 because a survey on the impoundment upstream of the dam has been delayed because of quite a bit of flow in the river. We plan to let some water out to let the surveyors go in and do the work. We can still meet the end of June deadline, but would prefer the buffer of December. April 2024 is the end of the Stormwater Planning Grant. February of 2023 was our kick-off meeting with the Coastal Resilience folks; June 2023 would be our end meeting if we can't extend our deadline from June to December. October 2023 is a mid-term discussion with the Stormwater folks, and April of 2024 is the close-out of that grant. In a few months, the consultant will come to the River Advisory meeting to give an update on the work. A draft of the final report should be ready in June 2024.

Mr. Huber asked if the presentation would be a regular River Advisory Committee meeting or a public meeting that invited the surrounding towns. Mr. Vlasich said he thought it would be a normal River Advisory meeting. We could invite Brentwood for the May 2023 consultant update so they can see what progress is being made.

Mr. Vlasich said people have asked what we can do to get rid of the "High Hazard" designation for the dam. He'd like to bring in Jim Weber of the Dam Bureau to talk to the River Advisory Committee about that on the same day as the consultant update.

Resident Don Latein, who lives near the Pickpocket Dam, asked why this is a High Hazard Dam. Mr. Vlasich said the town had to do a breach analysis that looked at a breach in the dam during both a sunny event and a storm event, and the implications of the breach downstream. Houses, mobile homes, and Kingston Road could be affected, and the severity of those effects warranted the High Hazard classification.

Mr. Vlasich said by June 1, 2024, we must submit an application to reconstruct the dam or a plan otherwise. Whatever we choose, the work should be done by December 2027.

Mr. Mattera asked if the final report will be folded into task 7 and therefore completed by April of 2024. Mr. Vlasich said that's correct. Mr. Mattera asked if the draft report goes to the Dam Bureau. Mr. Vlasich said yes. What the DES [Department of Environmental Services] folks will be waiting for is what the town wants to do to increase the discharge capacity of the dam. That decision needs to be made by June 2024. As long as we are diligently working on getting answers, some deadlines can be extended. Mr. Mattera asked if December 2027 is when the work has to be complete or just started, and Mr. Vlasich said the work has to be complete by that time.

Mr. Vlasich said the Exeter Reservoir is another High Hazard Dam. We put in a grant to DES for \$172,000 to see how to meet the discharge requirements. We got word that the grant was approved, so that work will be starting in the next few months. This project won't have immediate answers; it will take at least a year.

Mr. Latein asked if the plan to increase the discharge of Exeter Reservoir could apply to Pickpocket Dam. Mr. Vlasich said they both need to be able to pass a 2.5 x 100 year storm event. For the Great Dam, it was only a 50 year storm event, because that was a Low Hazard Dam. The 2.5 x 100 storm event is the connection between the two projects.

Mr. Vlasich said we got a \$45,000 grant that will help us with our Adaptive Management Plan on tackling the nitrogen situation in Great Bay. We have a contract with a consultant for \$89,000 to do analysis for us. This will be similar to the Lincoln Street drainage project but will look at other areas of town. Another part of the plan is the fertilizer program, looking at how we can educate our residents in the appropriate use of fertilizers. The third part is on improving septic systems. PREP [The Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership] is doing similar activities.

Mr. Huber asked if the Committee should invite PREP to speak about their work, and Mr. Vlasich said yes, when they're done in the fall. Mr. Mattera said he works for PREP, and he agrees that it would be best to wait for that project's conclusion.

Mr. Latein asked whether the improvements mean a full replacement of the septic system, or just some additions. Mr. Vlasich said he will be able to answer those questions as the project goes along.

Mr. Huber asked if we know what percentage of residents have septic systems. Mr. Vlasich said we will know. We've given the consultants the data of who's being charged a sewer bill which they can use to determine that.

Mr. Vlasich said regarding the Winter Street Kids Park BMP [Best Management Practice], we'll be installing something that helps remove the nutrients there. We did a boring to see where the groundwater elevations were. When we put the well in, the

groundwater was deeper than the drainline, but some recent tests have the water closer to the drain, which would be more challenging.

Mr. Vlasich gave an update on the siphons project. The siphon goes underneath the river to Swasey Parkway, to the main pump station, to the treatment facility at Newfields Road. Those siphons were at capacity and we needed more capacity for development. We needed an additional siphon across the river. We also did a cleaning and inspection of the existing siphons, but we found holes in the existing siphons. We needed more funds to replace them. Construction started in December, but we hit ledge, which was unexpected despite having information from previous borings. The subcontractor had to switch to rock drilling. We made it through, but during the enlarging, the drill mechanism got stuck in the river and the shaft broke. Next week, the contractor will try to remove the shaft and either reattach the drill rods or abandon that hole and start over. It's important that we continue because the condition of the existing siphons isn't very good.

Mr. Huber asked if we're pursuing additional grants to cover the costs. Mr. Vlasich said there are no grants right now. It's up in the air how we will finance it.

Mr. Huber asked if this project is a major source of nitrogen for Great Bay, and Mr. Vlasich said right now we have no indication that this project is causing nitrogen pollution.

3. Other Business
 - a. There was no other business discussed at this meeting.
4. Public Comment
 - a. There was no public comment at this meeting.
5. Review Committee Calendar
 - a. Mr. Huber said the next meeting will be May 18.
6. Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Papakonstantis moved to adjourn. Mr. Bourdon seconded. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 3:55 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary