

River Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, June 16, 2022
3 PM
Town Offices, Nowak Room
Draft 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, PEA Rep Warren Biggins, Select Board Rep Niko Papakonstantis, and Town Engineer Paul Vlasich

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

1. Approval of Minutes

a. March 17, 2022

2. Update on River Issues

Paul Vlasich, the Town Engineer, gave an update on Pickpocket Dam. We're planning a study with our contractor, VHB Engineers. The first step of the study will include a bathymetric survey in the vicinity of the dam. This will be good enough that we can do designs on. From there, we will do 12 cross-sections of the impoundment and get cross-sections of elevations there. From that we will know how the impoundment will react to dam modification or possibly dam removal.

Mr. Huber said he learned the word "thalweg," which means a line connecting the lowest points of successive cross-sections of a valley or river. Mr. Vlasich said it also came up during the great dam removal.

Mr. Vlasich said regarding the study, the next step is impoundment probing. The contractors will go in with a steel rod and try to push it down into the soil layers and see where it's firmer. The subconsultant Park will then do an inspection of the dam to see if what's there is ok to build upon.

Task 2 will be alternative development. The alternatives we're looking at are stabilization; modification, such as lowering or extending the spillway; dam reclassification, to see if we can move it back to not a high hazard dam; and dam removal. We will learn the probable cost of each of those alternatives. The cost evaluations will separate out the cost for any fish capacity accommodations. We will have conceptual sketches and there will be a matrix that shows all findings. We will select three of those alternatives to carry forward for more detailed analysis.

Task 3 will be sediment sampling and developing a protocol that is approvable by NH DES [New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services]. The sampling will be looking for the chemicals and the physical properties of the soil to determine how the sediments can move. For sediment management during the construction process, we will mitigate sediment transfer if necessary.

Task 4, is an "H&H" or hydrology and hydraulics analysis. We've done some of the hydrology already, which is where we came up with the 2.5x the 100 year storm event. The flow we'll be designing to is 10,200 CFS [cubic feet per second]. The Coastal

Resilience Grant of \$40,000, which we haven't gotten yet, asks for us to see what happens with the 2.5x storm event under climate change.

Mr. Huber asked about the acronym IBF in the report, and Mr. Vlasich said he's not sure at the moment.

Mr. Vlasich said the hydraulic study will provide new survey data, including the thalweg. That information will be put into a program and we can test the various flows through it. We will also look at structures near the area, such as the Crossroad Bridge. Because we're running the storm events through the analysis, we can estimate some of how the FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] floodplain will change.

Task 5 is the cultural resources, and includes initiating the Section 106 consultant to review the historical significance of the dam. This will also include a feasibility study, impact analysis, a look at the inventory of rare species and fish passage, a wetland impact analysis, invasive species issues, riverine ice, water supplies, an inventory of wells within 1,000 feet of the river, how any modifications will affect water quality, infrastructure impacted, and visual simulations.

The feasibility study will present the alternatives summaries. There will be enough meetings to suffice for the grant obligations. The last page of the report has all the tasks with dollar figures, some of which will be paid for by the Coastal Resilience Grant of \$40,000 with the \$20,000 match, and the Cleanwater SRF [State Revolving Fund] grant of \$100,000. The remaining \$213,000 will come from the town; including the \$20,000 match, the total town obligation is \$233,000.

Mr. Ingram said this is all focused on Exeter, except for what's upstream. How will Brentwood pay for their part? Mr. Vlasich said that's not part of the study, it's something Exeter would have to tackle. Since the town is the owner of the dam, legally it's 100% on us. Mr. Huber said we need to involve Brentwood in discussions of alternatives, but we would need the study to be done. Mr. Vlasich said that's not entirely correct, we could update them prior to that. This committee has already invited representatives of Brentwood to attend these meetings. Mr. Huber said he wants to see them involved in what we're trying to sort out.

Mr. Huber asked when the budget will open up for the feasibility study to begin. Mr. Vlasich said he will finish the paperwork for the Coastal Resilience Grant and the Cleanwater SRF, which are due at the end of this month. Then it has to go to the Governing Council for award, which may take some time. Mr. Huber asked if the River Advisory Committee needs a July meeting, and Mr. Vlasich said he doesn't think so.

Mr. Jones asked if any effect on the dump will be part of the study. Mr. Vlasich said no, but the landfill monitoring consultant will be given information about what the river elevations are and will need to find out what effect the river elevation has on the landfill. He [Mr. Vlasich] will check in with that consultant and suggest a meeting.

Mr. Huber asked about a River Advisory Committee meeting on August 18 at 3 PM. Mr. Vlasich said he doesn't know if he'll have a lot more information by then. He suggested Mr. Huber reach out to him prior to that time to see if the committee should have a meeting.

Ms. Harman asked what we should talk about with Brentwood. Mr. Vlasich said each one of these items will be explored so that Brentwood representatives can be educated on what any of the modifications will mean.

Mr. Huber asked about the option of purchasing downstream properties to allow the dam to be reclassified. Mr. Vlasich said it's unlikely to work, since Route 111 will still be impacted, but the study will lay out all the options. We should have the data about 9 months after the study starts. Mr. Mattera asked if the River Committee will see the June and December progress report, and Mr. Vlasich said yes. He didn't put this study information on the website yet because it's still a draft.

3. Other Business

- a. Mr. Huber read two pieces of correspondence, one from a group of students regarding saving Brook Floater mussels, and a group from Building Block Commons regarding saving the ospreys. Mr. Huber said he forwarded these to other departments, since this committee has no authority to enforce permits.

4. Public Comment

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

5. Adjournment

Mr. Ingram moved to adjourn. Mr. Papakonstantis seconded. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 3:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary