

Draft Minutes

River Study Committee

July 21, 2016

1. Convene the Meeting

Chairman Lionel Ingram called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office building. Members present were Rod Bourdon, Roger Wakeman, Frank Ferraro, Virginia Raub, and Richard Huber. Also in attendance was Eric Hutchins from NOAA, and Selectman Don Clement. Chair Ingram introduced Terry Harmon as a new member of the Committee.

Ms. Harmon introduced herself briefly, saying she is an attorney and a musician.

2. Minutes of the May and June meetings

May 5, 2016 minutes:

Mr. Huber had some amendments to the May 5th meeting.

Motion: A Motion was made by Mr. Wakeman and seconded by Mr. Ferraro to approve the minutes of the May 5, 2016 River Study Committee meeting, as amended. Motion carried – all in favor.

June 16, 2016 minutes:

Mr. Huber and Mr. Ferraro had some amendments to the June 16th meeting.

Motion: A Motion was made by Mr. Ferraro and seconded by Ms. Raub to approve the minutes of the June 16, 2016 River Study Committee meeting, as amended. Motion carried – all in favor.

3. Climate Risk in the Seacoast – Julie LaBranche, RPC

Ms. LaBranche said she was asked to come back to report to the Committee about the CAPE project. She spoke with those involved in the project and said they are willing to sit and talk about what data they have. She said she has a cd with all that data on it. She will look at that cd within the next couple weeks. She said she will incorporate as much data as possible to the C-RiSe project. She also has the most recent CAPE report.

Mr. Ferraro said in regards to the use of the CAPE data, the confidence level of the precipitation data is still unknown. He said they could be using data with a low confidence level, which would give Ms. LaBranche a low confidence level on the C-RiSe study.

Ms. LaBranche said she has no intention of using all the data in the CAPE report, just that that pertains to what the C-RiSe is looking at. Mr. Ferraro asked if they will be using precipitation data from the CAPE study in C-RiSe and Ms. LaBranche said they are not.

Ms. LaBranche said they had their first C-RiSe meeting to introduce the flood maps. She said they will be having depth flooding maps too. They will be having another meeting in a couple weeks. At their meeting, they talked about who else can be involved. She said there is \$6,500 in technical assistance money left to help getting others engaged. She said they will want to develop an outreach plan.

At their last meeting, Ms. LaBranche said they started to identify problem areas in Exeter.

Chair Ingram said one goal is to integrate this data into the Master Plan update. Ms. LaBranche agreed this is great data to incorporate into the Master Plan.

4. Great Dam Project Update – Paul Vlasich

Mr. Vlasich said from the last River Committee meeting until now, the Native Americans had their ceremony for the dam. It was held on Summer solstice, June 20th.

On June 29th, a public information meeting was held, well attended, and well received.

Mr. Vlasich said on July 1st they started the draw down and on July 7th they opened the gate to let water flow naturally. On July 14th, town personnel put wetlands seed mix on the embankments of the river.

Mr. Vlasich reported on the dam's current progress, saying that starting the second week in July, portions of the fish ladder were removed. Today, he said part of the main dam has already been removed and they will be continuing today and tomorrow. EXTV has been showing up to take photos and videos.

There is a GANG box outside the Town Hall building with pieces of the dam in it for people to take as they please.

One thing they discovered during this dam removal process is that you can see part of the previous dam. He said there could be a meeting on Monday to look at the dam to see what process they will go through to memorialize the dam.

Looking ahead, Mr. Vlasich said the Town website is updated weekly on progress.

Mr. Vlasich anticipates the next diversion of the river would be the first week of August. There is a proposal from VHB on a breach analysis.

Mr. Vlasich next talked about the CIP, saying they had run out of money to do everything they needed to do, so they will need additional money to continue with mitigations

of the 106 requirements. Also, permits need to go out 3 years, so they will need to do monitoring.

Murray Segal, Exeter resident, said he doesn't understand how the level of the water in the river can be controlled without a dam. He is concerned about low water flow in periods of dry weather. Chair Ingram said the dam was never meant to be a flood control device. He said Swasey Parkway is all tidal flow. Mr. Vlasich said they are relying on the reservoir and wells. He said the dam removal feasibility study had all these issues and is available on the Town website.

Janice Wayne, Exeter resident, said she is concerned the river will eventually become a swamp. Chair Ingram said the river is going to flow downstream. He said that downstream of the dam will have tidal flow and upstream of the dam the likelihood of a swamp forming is very low. Mr. Ferraro added that nothing will change from downstream to Great Bay.

Mr. Clement said different weather patterns have an impact on rivers. He said we are in a drought right now. Upstream of the dam, Mr. Clement said removal of the dam will make the river shallower and narrower. He said the river will be much cleaner and healthier with some rain. He said the river now is a product of the weather patterns.

Chair Ingram said that behind the dam silt has piled up. He said once the dam is gone, the silt will go away and the muddiness will disappear.

Mr. Clement said there are different depths to the river bed.

Eric Hutchins, from NOAA, said he canoed the river a couple times recently. He said up near Linden Street is canoeable. He said beavers have built three dams near there. There is little garbage in that stretch and the banks look stable. He went to look for any trapped fish or wildlife and found none. He was at the dam today and notice there is no rebar inside the dam so it is making their job easier. He said the core of the dam is unconsolidated. It is coming apart easily. The center is not solid concrete.

Mr. Huber thanked Mr. Hutchins for his energy and dedication to the river.

Mr. Wakeman asked if the beaver activity is in the main area of the river. Mr. Hutchins said he is not concerned with side flooding, as he found some older dams too. The change to raise the water higher is not high.

5. River Cleanup – Ginny Raub

Ms. Raub said the river cleanup was on July 15 at Gilman Park. She said some debris had been picked up already. They had canoes during the cleanup. Residents had picked up on their own before the cleanup. She thanked all the people who showed up. She hopes people try to keep the waterways clean.

Ms. Raub said there was a mascot called "happy fish". Mr. Hutchins said it travels around the world during fish passages.

Mr. Huber asked what the most exciting find in the river is. Ms. Raub said they just found bizarre things.

Mr. Clement said people at Franklin Street had been cleaning up on their own. He said Barbara McCoolis took some artifacts back to the Historical Society, but they found nothing of historic value. He said up by River Street people noticed 55 gallon drums and things that are impossible to take out by hand.

Ms. Raub said Kristen Murphy and DPW were very helpful.

6. River Ceremony – Don Clement

Mr. Clement said this was briefly discussed at the last BOS meeting. He told the Town Manager he would put together a list of who to invite, which he did, and sent it to Mr. Dean. He said Mr. Dean is sending the list to DPW. When they have a list that includes everyone, they will try to come up with a date. He asked Barbara McCoolis to be involved so she can talk about the history. When he gets the information back from the Town Manager, they will move forward.

Chair Ingram gave a few suggestions of people to invite. Mr. Clement said they are included. Mr. Hutchins suggested they have a month lead time for this.

7. Pickpocket Dam Status – DES

Steve Doyon, from the DES Dam Bureau, gave a history of the Pickpocket Dam. She said it is a low hazard classification dam. In 2010 they did the most recent inspection and reviewed flood plain and aerial maps. They have realized they should look further into this. He talked about a dam study to look at flooding near the Pickpocket Dam. He said VHB has provided a proposal and could possibly do an analysis. Through review, he said the dam seems to be in good condition.

8. Public Business

None.

9. Public Comment

None.

10. Adjourn the Meeting

Chair Ingram asked when their next meeting should be. Mr. Vlasich said they need to get the dam out and restore the river bottom. He didn't think they needed an August meeting. However, he said he will need the Committee's support after the CIP process starts.

Mr. Hutchins suggested they set an August meeting just in, even if it gets canceled.

Mr. Ferraro said they should tentatively meet on August 18, but otherwise they will meet on September 15.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:26 am.

Respectively submitted,

Nicole Piper, Recording Secretary