

## Draft Minutes

### River Study Committee

September 15, 2016

#### **1. Convene the Meeting**

Chairman Lionel Ingram called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office building. Other members present were Frank Ferraro, Rod Bourdon, Roger Wakeman, Virginia Raub, and Richard Huber. Board of Selectmen Representative, Don Clement also attended.

#### **2. Minutes of the previous meeting**

Chair Ingram said the July 2016 minutes were not available at present and they would be taken up at the next meeting.

#### **4. Great Dam Project Update**

Paul Vlasich provided a report on the status of the project. The dam has been removed. The fish ladder has been removed. During dam removal, some timber cribbing from a previous dam at this site was discovered. This required photo documentation efforts and GPS locator efforts to support documentation of these artifacts on the as-built plan. The absence of rebar made the dam removal easier than had been anticipated. The drought has also facilitated the work of dam removal and has resulted in savings of time and cost. The penstock was opened up and then sealed with a block wall. The trash wall was replaced. A diamond saw was used to establish a clean cut on both sides of the river.

Some changes from the original project plan have occurred. The slope of the channel has undergone some modification. The primary fish channel has been moved closer to Pleasant Street. A pool was widened. A riffle crest was installed. These changes have allowed an extra channel to be installed to provide a plausible secondary route for fish migration.

Some of the costs of these changes have been covered by our funding agencies. NOAA has allowed a trade for work that was planned for the Pickpocket Dam for this work. This allowed about \$20K to be transferred to support the changes to the river channel. Another approximately \$21K from funds that were allocated from NHF&G to improve the dam removal project to improve fish migration was available to support these changes to the river channel.

Work was done by engineering to evaluate the design using hydraulic modeling to address concerns about scouring and flood elevations due to the dual channels. Some reinforcements were extended to protect against this possibility.

Efforts continue to restore Founder's Park, replace a tree, re-establish fencing, and provide for irrigation.

Estimated savings to the project from the drought are about \$45K. These savings have been applied to other related needs such as lowering the river intake at the Phillips Exeter Academy property. Also, about \$10K became available from the NHDES River Management and Protection Fund. Parts are on order for the needed intake valve replacement to allow flow to shut down for maintenance.

Additional outstanding items include: Installing permanent markers to monitor soil movement and scour for 3 to 5 years as required by agencies. Town capital improvement projects to provide for adjustments to the river bottom should they be needed. There is about \$55K from Fish and Game for a year 2 adjustment. There will be FEMA LOMAR (Letter of Map Revision) Analysis to be conducted to determine the post dam removal flood maps. Work on the resources for the eventual display in the library will continue.

Frank Ferraro and Don Clement thanked the project participants, the contractor, and the engineers for their good work. Especially important was the use of social media to keep the public informed, taking the heat for the public and responding with thoughtful concern. Weekly updates sent out by email and extensive coverage by local newspapers was also beneficial. Lionel Ingram mentioned that it was fortuitous that the intake was managed within the budget and would not require capital improvement project consideration. The river intake work and the Founder's Park cleanup are all that remain for this year.

### **3. River Ceremony**

Don Clement provided a report on The Great Dam Removal and Exeter River Restoration Ceremony that was conducted at Founder's Park on Friday, September 9<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM. It was nicely done. There was a good public turnout. Paul Vlasich provided an account of the process. Virginia Raub provided commentary on the River Study Committee and included a remembrance of Pete Richardson's immense contribution to the project. Ted Diers of NHDES, whose work was critical to getting the whole process started, spoke. NOAA was represented by Regional Supervisor, John Catena, who acknowledged the critical work of Eric Hutchens on this project. Douglas Grout, Chief of Marine Fisheries, represented NH Fish and Game at the proceedings. Barbara Rimkunas, Curator, Exeter Historical Society spoke and was very informative and entertaining, stating that it was OK to be sad about the loss of the dam but it is the dawn of a new era. Don Clement concluded his account of the ceremony by mentioning his disappointment that no one took him up on his request that the ceremony end with a rain dance to turn the river back on after this drought.

Brian Griset acknowledged the contribution made by Lionel Ingram over many years to provide for consideration of river restoration.

### **5. Public Business**

Frank Ferraro asked that his concerns regarding the CAPE study be considered. The concern is that the CAPE report may be relied upon going forward even though it is seriously flawed.

Brian Griset recounted his experience with the CAPE project. In his statement, the project was originally planned to include participation by a stakeholders group, but such meetings were terminated for over a year. Only through his threat of action under the Freedom of Information Act was a copy of the grant application obtained. The scope of work appears to have a preconceived notion of where the project would end. An inventory of infrastructure to assist in preparing for climate change issues was to be included but it was not delivered. It seems to Brian that the report may have been designed to support a marketing plan to support an approach for land use regulation. The data used involved an out-of-date model from the UN. Scientific standards were not applied. Dr. Paul Kirshen has since left UNH. The CAPE document has not been formally accepted. The concern is that it may be used in subsequent projects as a political instrument to promote implementation of various land use regulations.

Further, misuse of this draft document could reflect badly on the town of Exeter. Brian recommends that a vote be taken on whether the grant was fulfilled by the deliverables received.

Don Clement commented that the report has not been accepted. Federal grant money was spent and the process has fallen flat. It is not going anywhere.

Lionel Ingram commented that Julie LaBranche is in contact with some of the CAPE personnel and may be able to see where it stands in relation to UNH. She is expected to report on the Climate Risk in the Seacoast (C-Rise) Project at our next meeting.

Rod Bourdon asked if anyone present wished to add public comment on this issue. There was none.

Frank Ferraro commented that there was no adequate review or acceptance of the CAPE deliverables and they should be stamped "DRAFT" officially. A second concern is that Dr. Paul Kirshen might market this study saying that Exeter is standing behind it.

Lionel Ingram asked Don Clement to see if the town can take action to formally clarify the status. Also, NOAA, the funding agency might be asked about the status.

Roger Wakeman asked if the document could be removed from the town website and other public circulation.

## **6. Public Comment**

Richard Miller, owner of three properties on River Street, asked, with the river so low after dam removal, whether the properties are still in a flood zone. He has owned these properties for about 50 years. On one of these properties, he spent about \$40K jacking up the foundation about 3½ feet. It has since survived a flood without damage or losing services. Can particular properties be taken out of the flood zones?

Paul Vlasich commented that the revision of the flood maps for the post dam removal condition will be ongoing for some time. In the coming year there is funding for analysis to aid this process. For a particular property, there is a Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) Process. It can be used to get a property excluded from a flood plain if the right conditions are met.

Virginia Raub commented that there is ongoing work related to the Master Plan that may need the involvement of River Study Committee interests.

Don Clement commented that there will be an ongoing need for the River Committee to be involved in issues that don't necessarily involve the dam, such as insurance issues or legal issues, etc.

## **7. Adjourn the Meeting**

The next meeting will be on Oct 20 at 9 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 am.

Respectively submitted,

Richard Huber, substituting for Recording Secretary

