

LMRLAC – August 23, 2012

LOWER MERRIMACK RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

August 23, 2012

Members:

- ✓ = present

Current:

- ✓ Kathryn Nelson (Chair) -- Nashua
Michael Redding (Vice Chair) – Merrimack
- ✓ Karen Archambault (Secretary) – Nashua
- ✓ Michael Croteau - Litchfield
Nelson Disco - Merrimack
- ✓ George May – Merrimack
Bob Robbins – Hudson
- ✓ David Scaer – Hudson

Pending Renewal:

- ✓ Jim Barnes (Treasurer) – Hudson
Glenn McKibben – Litchfield

Associate Members:

Mildred Mugica – Nashua

Also in attendance:

- Amy Gill, Stormwater Engineer, Nashua Department of Public Works
- Geoff Daly, Nashua, corridor resident
- H. Jeffrey Brandt, Project Manager, TRC

The meeting was called to order at 7pm in the Music/Art/Media room of the Nashua Public Library by Chair Kath Nelson. Kath stated that Michael R. informed her that he would not be able to attend the meeting.

Minutes

The minutes from the meeting of May 24 were approved.

Governor's Water Sustainability Commission

Kath stated that Michael R. informed her he attended a meeting of the Governor's Water Sustainability Commission. She read from his e-mail which summarized the main points and recommended actions which have come from public input and the commission's meetings to date. Kath asked members to consider what the Water Sustainability Commission might mean to LACs.

604(b) Grant for River Continuity Assessment

Kath read from a memo Jill Longval had sent her on the status of the project so far. In it Jill summarized the process of identifying the culverts to be assessed and the number of culverts assessed so far: two culverts in Hudson, four in Litchfield, and six in Merrimack. One or two more days of field work remain to assess culverts in Nashua and Litchfield.

Mr. Daly commented that access to the Salmon Brook outfall in Nashua would be dangerous, due in part to the many downed trees in the area, and that he had recommended against it to Jill.

A brief discussion followed on the level of detail requested on the culvert assessment forms. Mr. Daly stated that DES had indicated at the training session that it was open to modifications

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to the form. He mentioned that training attendees felt that the measurements requested on the form were excessive.

Kath asked Ms. Gill for her view on the project. Ms. Gill replied that Nashua had hired interns three years ago to identify every crossing they could find to add to the City's GIS data. Mr. Daly commented that the detailed culvert information is difficult for the public to access. Ms. Gill responded that the data are easier to obtain internally.

Kath started a brief discussion on next steps after the initial culvert assessment is complete. She suggested identification of culverts with the potential to open up habitat, and combining that with planned road improvements, looking at potential grant opportunities to fund the culvert improvements.

Ms. Gill pointed out that, in some cases, culvert work would require a hydraulic study, pointing out that a failed culvert can provide storage which is beneficial to sites downstream.

Jim suggested LMRLAC invite Jill to attend a meeting to discuss the project once the draft report is ready.

Kath said she would forward a copy of the project status e-mail from Jill to members.

City of Nashua Wetland application – 2012-01770

The project is to install an 800 ft² storage tank near the CSO 4 outfall to the Merrimack River at the end of Burke St.

Kath introduced Amy Gill, Stormwater Engineer with the Nashua Public Works Department. Ms. Gill provided a brief history of the EPA consent decree. Ms. Gill explained that the City initially implemented sewer separation projects, but rethought the approach around 2003, and decided instead to capture, hold, and treat. She explained that Nashua's Waste Water Treatment Facility has a capacity of 50 million gallons per day, and that Nashua added a wet weather treatment facility, which has a capacity of 60 million gallons per day. The City has to treat the two-year actual storm.

Ms. Gill explained that CSO 4 is the second-to-last large project. The screen and disinfection facility is the last one; it is currently in design and will be completed in 2015.

Ms. Gill introduced Jeff Brandt, Project Manager with TRC, who is consulting on the project. Mr. Brandt provided handouts showing the location of the project and several photographs of the current conditions at the site. The site is owned by the railroad; the City has a sewer easement on the site. There are no wetlands on the site but it is within the Merrimack River prime wetland buffer.

Mr. Brandt explained that stormwater currently goes to the Merrimack River via the CSO 4 outfall. The project consists of building an underground tank. Stormwater will be held in the tank until there is enough capacity in the interceptor, at which time the contents of the tank will gravity feed to the interceptor and to the treatment plant. The project includes a weir so that a flow greater than the two-year storm will overflow to the river.

When Mr. Daly asked about solids, Ms. Gill explained that the tank will not collect solids, just sediments.

Kath asked whether a diffuser will be used and Ms. Gill replied that there will not be a diffuser. Kath then asked about erosion and Mr. Brandt replied that there is no evidence of erosion on site at present.

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Kath asked whether the CSO will be activated fewer times after the project and what the before and after count would be. Ms. Gill replied that there will be a reduction in frequency at the outfall.

A brief discussion followed on the appearance of the site. Mr. Brandt explained that there will be a 700 ft² trench for the tank. About 4000 ft² of trees will need to be cleared for the project, but much of it is bittersweet, poison ivy and small material. The soil will be trucked away and the site will be re-covered and re-seeded with herbaceous vegetation.

Jim asked about the location of the 100-year floodplain and Mr. Brandt replied that the whole site is within it. Mr. Daly commented that the site was flooded in 2006. Jim asked whether the site would survive such an event; Mr. Brandt replied that it would. There will be no new impervious surface on the site.

Kath asked whether there was protection against river backflow. Ms. Gill replied that there is a flap gate which will prevent this. Kath asked if there will be fewer e. coli spikes; Ms. Gill explained that one of the benefits of capture is that the first flush is captured in the tank.

George expressed his belief that the project is positive for the river and that he agrees with the approach to treat stormwater.

Kath asked about treating phosphorus and when Nashua's permit is up for review. Ms. Gill explained that it expired in 2000 and is being reviewed now.

George asked how many CSO releases had occurred this summer. Ms. Gill replied that there had been very few. She explained, for example, that prior to the August 4th storm the slide gate hadn't opened in a year. George asked if this project would have handled flow from the August 4th storm; Ms. Gill replied it would not. Ms. Gill explained that the August 4th storm brought 1 inch of rain in 15 minutes to parts of Nashua and caused some manhole covers to pop.

George asked whether the project took into account data from studies which predict increased storm activity; Ms. Gill replied that such studies are discussed but that the City follows the State's lead on sizing. She commented that there is discussion on changing the definition of the 2-year, 5-year, and 10-year storm.

A discussion followed about challenges in stormwater treatment, among which are pharmaceuticals and baby wipes/cleaning wipes. Ms. Gill said there is a huge increase in those products at the treatment plant. She commented that fats, oils, and grease are another challenge because it re-hardens in the pipes.

Ms. Gill stated the project has not yet been reviewed by the Conservation Commission or ZBA.

Members had no comments on the project beyond keeping the site neat, and handed back the handout materials to be re-used at the Nashua Conservation Commission and/or ZBA meeting presentations.

Members thanked Ms. Gill and Mr. Brandt for coming in and speaking to them about the project.

Water Sampling Program

George suggested LMRLAC send a letter to police departments in the four towns to suggest setting up a permanent secure collection site for prescription medicines. George pointed out that this serves two purposes – it gets the medicines out of the hands of illicit users, and it gets it out of the wastewater stream.

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Mr. Daly offered to speak with the Nashua health officer and will report back. George in turn suggested that copies of the letter could be sent to all the health departments.

Kath suggested George put a draft letter together and circulate it for members to review.

George also explained that Kath had forwarded him a letter from a student looking for service project opportunities. George suggested the student conduct macroinvertebrate testing at two locations on the Souhegan, and George stated the student did a good job with the project.

Members complimented George on getting a byline on the water sampling reports in the Telegraph.

Application Review Process

Kath brought up the application received this summer about a 4-lot subdivision in Litchfield. At the time, she contacted Joan McKibben, who replied that the project included no plans to work near the river at present. Kath also mentioned the PSNH project for a utility corridor in Litchfield (file number 2012-01164); at the time, Kath had given it to Michael R. to review and provided comment to the State based on his review. Kath mentioned that she has heard nothing back from DES.

From that, Kath led into the topic of establishing connections with each town, thinking that LMRLAC may wish to change its focus and provide more comments at the local level. Kath stated that LMRLAC is well represented in Hudson, with Jim being on the Planning Board. Litchfield is covered by Michael C.'s presence on the Conservation Commission. Michael C. then commented that Litchfield has added a reference to LMRLAC on its review checklist.

Kath suggested members consider what types of projects LMRLAC would want to see at the local level. Kath also asked for Michael C. to let LMRLAC know if the Litchfield Conservation Commission receives feedback from DES on permit conditions.

Members also briefly discussed clearcutting activities and its impact on the river. Mr. Daly pointed out that it's not just the clearcutting itself, but also the disturbance caused by the equipment used to cut. Members discussed the clearcutting as a response to the October 2011 snowstorm and power outages, but the clearcutting in turn has a negative impact on the river corridor (e.g. erosion, temperature, wildlife habitat).

Miscellaneous

Kath reminded members that Tracie Sales is now working at DES for Jacquie Colburn.

George mentioned that the Merrimack River Watershed Council (MRWC) has a new director; her name is Caroly Shumway. George said he had spoken with her and discussed the difference between membership and grant organizations; suggesting the approach of getting grants and then hiring staff to administer the grants.

The MRWC is hosting a talk on fish restoration on Tuesday, August 28.

Bank Account/Treasurer's Report

Jim stated he went to Citizens Bank to find out about accounts there. At Citizens, an account requires either a minimum balance of \$2000.00 or five transactions per month to avoid monthly fees. Several members suggested other possible options, from other banks to credit unions to online banking options. Jim will check with DCU and Karen said she'd get information from Logix (formerly Lockheed Federal Credit Union).

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Jim stated something needs to be done soon because the state check is good for 180 days.

Members briefly discussed how to use the money. Among the suggestions were brochures and water sampling or monitoring equipment. For the September meeting, members will bring ideas and estimated costs.

Local Updates

Nashua

Kath informed members that Lucy St. John is leaving her position at the City of Nashua. Kath will contact the City when the position is filled to establish contact. Members expressed their best wishes for Lucy.

George praised Mr. Daly for his work on Parcel F in Nashua, an easement amendment for which is proceeding through the legislative process.

Hudson

Jim mentioned that Hudson's Highway and Recreation Departments will be doing some work in Merrill Park, and he will pass along more information when he receives it. Kath commented that Merrill Park improvements could be proposed as mitigation for another project in the corridor.

Jim mentioned that Benson Park has a new wildlife blind which was an Eagle Scout project.

Upcoming Meetings

Kath will invite James Vayo from Renaissance Downtowns to the September 27 meeting if enough members can attend that meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Next LMRLAC Meeting

The next LMRLAC meeting is currently scheduled for Thursday, September 25, 2012, at 7:00 pm at the Nashua Public Library.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Archambault
secretary