

LMRLAC – March 24, 2016

LOWER MERRIMACK RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

March 24, 2016

Members:

- ✓ = present

Current:

- ✓ Gene Porter (Chair) – Nashua (current term expires 12/18/16)
- ✓ Nelson Disco (Vice Chair) – Merrimack (current term expires 08/28/17)
- ✓ Karen Archambault (Secretary) – Nashua (current term expires 08/12/17)
- Christine Dupree (Treasurer) – Hudson (current term expires 11/25/17)
- Michael Croteau – Litchfield (current term expires 08/12/17)
- Richard LeBourdais – Hudson (current term expires 11/06/17)
- Francis Murphy – Nashua (current term expires 02/18/19)

Pending Renewal:

- ✓ George May – Merrimack (current term expired 01/07/14)

Associate Members:

Mildred Mugica – Nashua

Also in attendance:

None

Meeting called to order at 7:13pm by Chairman Gene Porter in the Hunt Room of the Nashua Public Library, without a quorum present.

Minutes

The minutes from the February 17, 2016 meeting were briefly reviewed but formal approval was tabled, no quorum being present.

Old Business

Nashua: Beazer East Alteration of Terrain Application (File #20151231-200), Shoreland Application (File #2015-03425), Dredge and Fill Application (File #2015-03105)

Chairman Porter stated that Beazer's applications have been approved and that the comments submitted by the Nashua Conservation Commission and LMRLAC regarding an easement for a Heritage Trail segment and boat ramp improvements were rejected, on the grounds that they do not meet aquatic resource mitigation criteria.

Aquatic Resource Mitigation (ARM) Fund Usage Suggestions

Attendees discussed a few ideas, including cleaning up sections of Salmon Brook, improving culverts on Merrimack tributaries for fish passage, or bank stabilization. Chairman Porter will forward a suggestion to the Nashua Waterways Manager that some ARM funds could be spent to improve and stabilize the Merrimack River bank in Greeley Park.

Members also suggested that a study to determine what areas of Salmon Brook would benefit from cleaning up might be a good use of some ARM funds.

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Nashua: Residences at Riverfront Landing Shoreland Application (File #2016-00330), Alteration of Terrain Application (File #20160125-007)

Chairman Porter reminded attendees that LMRLAC had requested sight lines from the applicant but was rejected. Instead, LMRLAC did its own informal sight line review of the site, and concluded that the buildings will be mostly screened from view.

Chairman Porter also quoted from a letter to the applicant from DES requesting additional information. The response is due by June 16. The request includes references to

- Contacting the NH Heritage Bureau regarding bald eagle impact mitigation
- Responding to comments submitted by LMRLAC

Mr. Disco asked what the outcome was of the discussion about the trees between the building and the levee. Chairman Porter replied that the trees between the building and the levee are being cut for access (construction and/or emergency vehicle access).

Merrimack: Flatley Mixed-Use Project Alteration of Terrain Application (File #20160201-010)

Mr. Disco had invited the engineer to tonight's meeting, but he had another meeting he was already committed to. The engineer submitted a series of pictures by e-mail with which he indicated that the buildings on site should not be visible from the river. Chairman Porter expressed his satisfaction with the response and the rest of the members concurred.

Chairman Porter quoted from a letter to the applicant from DES requesting additional information. The response is due by July 1. The request includes references to

- LMRLAC's comments submitted April 23, 2015
- Checking with the NH Heritage Bureau about the possibility of rare or endangered species on site
- Removing the snow storage from the northern end of the parking lot, which would drain into Dumping Brook
- Relabeling rain gardens as infiltration basins

Hudson – 6 Harvest View Circle, Apparent Clearcut to River

Chairman Porter briefed members on additional information he had received since this subject was first brought up at the January 28th meeting. He stated he had received a response from Hudson Code Enforcement indicating that there was not a violation on the site.

Chairman Porter commented that raising the issue demonstrates that LMRLAC is monitoring development activity along the river. He encouraged members to keep an eye out for signs of fresh cutting along the river.

Mr. May suggested LMRLAC reach out to the towns with information on raising awareness on the need for and benefits of a vegetated buffer along the river, appropriate plantings, and such. Chairman Porter will work on putting something together.

Proposed Northeast Energy Direct (NED) Pipeline Project

Chairman Porter stated he had received a link from NRPC to a report, containing the bulk of responses to comments submitted. Chairman Porter stated he had read about two-thirds of the 30-ish page report thus far, and indicated it appears to be a persuasive rebuttal to the concerns expressed.

Chairman Porter stated that this report is in response to comments on the application. The environmental impact comments are covered separately in the environmental impact study.

Chairman Porter will forward the e-mail and link to the rest of LMRLAC members.

New Business

Nashua: Beazer East Application for Special Exception to Work in Merrimack River and Prime Wetland Buffer

After a brief discussion, Chairman Porter indicated he will submit LMRLAC's comments again, requesting a conservation easement for a trail and public access to the results from the monitoring wells.

Chairman Porter also reminded attendees about Mr. May's point from last meeting, that LMRLAC will have another opportunity to request an easement when the parcel comes before the committee for development.

This led to a brief discussion on the origin of the Heritage Trail, how it started and whether to approach DES about requiring easements for future Heritage Trail segments. Members also discussed the challenges of initial trail construction vs. trail maintenance. Ms. Archambault mentioned the small Heritage Trail segment in Nashua, since closed, along the Nashua River at Bridge Street.

Members also briefly discussed bridge aesthetics. Mr. May said he would contact the Nashua Garden Club with a suggestion to install flower boxes along the Bridge Street bridge.

Merrimack: PFOA Detected in Merrimack Water

Mr. Disco highlighted points from the meeting in Merrimack on March 23, at which several representatives from NH DES, plus the state epidemiologist, and representatives from the Merrimack Village District (MVD), briefed residents on the status of the investigation into perflurorooctanoic acid (PFOA) detected in water at the Saint-Gobain plant. Saint-Gobain reported to DES in late February that it had detected PFOA in the water system in its facility, which is serviced by the Merrimack Village District.

Mr. Disco explained that the PFOA contamination was likely due to airborne emissions at Saint-Gobain in the early 2000s. PFOA settles into the ground and can get into the groundwater. Its long term effects are currently unknown. He further explained that DES is currently trying to determine the extent of the contamination by sampling wells within a 1-mile radius of the Saint-Gobain plant. The 1-mile radius covers portions of Merrimack and Litchfield.

Chairman Porter asked about the presence of PFOA in the Merrimack River and in the riverbed. Ms. Archambault commented that the initial focus is on drinking water supplies. Mr. May pointed out that Nashua draws water from the Merrimack River to supplement its water supply. Chairman Porter clarified that, last year, the Merrimack River was used by Pennichuck for two weeks in the summertime.

DES has a Web page with information and resources about PFOA and the status of the investigation: <http://des.nh.gov/organization/commissioner/pfoa.htm>

Chairman Porter suggested LMRLAC maintain 'watchful waiting' on this issue. Members agreed to keep this as a standing agenda item for future meetings.

Treasurer's Report

No report for this month.

Membership

Chairman Porter will reach out to the Town of Litchfield for another member. He will also reach out to Mr. McWeeney.

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Nashua Rail Meeting

Chairman Porter had attended a rail meeting at the Nashua Public Library earlier in the week. Members briefly discussed the political challenges of the proposed expanded rail plans. Chairman Porter pointed out that the Downeaster has exceeded ridership expectations. He stated that an upgraded rail line could lead to opportunities for public access and parks along the river. He requested all members think about the implications of rail service to the river corridor.

Nashua River Access

Chairman Porter informed attendees that the Nashua Waterways Manager is working on improving public access to the Nashua River boat launch site in the Millyard.

Rock Survey

Chairman Porter had contacted Enel, as a representative of the state Public Water Access Advisory Board (PWAAB) concerned about the river's navigability. He contacted Enel to start a conversation about getting aerial photographs of the river while it's lowered for the Crest Gate bladder system installation.

Chairman Porter indicated he had some information that it can cost \$500 per acre for mapping. The section of the Merrimack River under LMRLAC's purview is about 150 acres.

Members discussed various ways to accomplish this, including finding drone enthusiasts who might be interested in taking videos of the river. Members also discussed using some of the funds from the Treasury to pay for the gas for an airplane flight.

Mr. May will research options for aerial photography by airplane; Mr. Disco will look into the drone option.

Mr. May suggested that a sign at the Taylor's Falls bridge, warning boaters of rocks upstream, would be of benefit. Chairman Porter responded that he would rather wait until after the rock survey, to better determine where such a warning should be posted.

Members also discussed getting rocks marked with buoys, or making a chart of the rocks, once the survey data is collected.

Items from the Floor

Chairman Porter commented that he had attended the Merrimack River Watershed Council annual meeting on Saturday, February 20 in Lawrence.

Ms. Archambault requested that a review of the project review checklist be added to an upcoming meeting.

Mr. May showed members an illustrated edition of Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold, which is available at the Nashua Public Library.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25pm.

Next LMRLAC Meeting

The next LMRLAC meeting is currently scheduled for Thursday, April 28, 2016, at 7:00 pm at the Nashua Public Library.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Archambault
Secretary