

LMRLAC – May 23, 2013

LOWER MERRIMACK RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

May 23, 2013

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

Pending Renewal:

- ✓ Jim Barnes (Treasurer) – Hudson

Associate Members:

Mildred Mugica – Nashua

Also in attendance:

James Vayo, Assistant Project Manager, Renaissance Downtowns

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm in the Music/Art/Media room of the Nashua Public Library by Chair Kath Nelson. Michael Redding, George, and Nelson had all notified Kath that they would be unable to attend the meeting.

Minutes

Approval of the minutes from the March meeting was deferred.

New Business

None

Old Business

Nashua - Renaissance Downtowns – Bridge Street Project and River Access

Kath introduced James Vayo to provide an update on the Bridge Street project in Nashua and to discuss possible options for river access. Mr. Vayo displayed the first phase site plan, which had been approved by the Nashua Planning Board on May 2.

Mr. Vayo pointed out several features on the site plan. The development is outside of the 75-foot wetland buffer to the Nashua River. Building B, the proposed community building on the first level with a restaurant on the second level, includes a patio area with pervious pavers. The parking spaces on the site have pervious pavers as well. Mr. Vayo pointed out that the patio area was laid out in such a way to provide equipment access to the levee, as requested by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Mr. Vayo also pointed out the proposed Building C and adjacent parking, and explained that that portion of the site plan is contingent on the result of analysis on the continued need for the levee basin, currently located on that portion of the site. The basin provides storage for stormwater backflow in large storm events. There is a study currently underway to determine whether the basin will still be needed with the planned storage tanks associated with the site and with the screening and disinfection facility.

LMRLAC – May 23, 2013

Kath commented that the Alteration of Terrain application includes Low Impact Development (LID) features. Mr. Vayo explained that the soil on site is good for infiltration. Jim asked whether the driving lanes were impervious. Mr. Vayo responded that they were, due to considerations like plow blades and heavy trucks. Kath commented that it will be a good demonstration site for the concept.

Mr. Vayo also pointed out a low region in the middle of the site, with a surrounding retaining wall and a manhole in it, to which a bilge pump could be connected to remove water from the site, should an emergency situation arise requiring that. Mr. Vayo also stated that the buildings are 26-30 inches higher than the rest of the site. He stated that a lot of redundancy is built in to the site due to concerns about stormwater.

Jim asked how much green space was on the proposed plan. Mr. Vayo replied that there wasn't much. Kath asked about the tree inventory and Mr. Vayo replied that he would include that in the plans when he sends them to Kath. He summarized that there are sufficient trees in the shoreland buffer to meet the 50-point requirement.

This led into a discussion of the levee itself and possible options for river access. Mr. Vayo stated that Renaissance Downtowns is interested in making a walking path on the top of the levee, and that the Army Corps of Engineers is not opposed to that, if the improvements are made in such a way that the top of the levee will not erode from the use. Mr. Vayo commented that the levee is in need of maintenance. Mr. Vayo also stated that the City retains ownership of and responsibility for the levee, and that Renaissance Downtowns is in discussions with the City regarding the levee.

Mr. Vayo explained that there is a 30-foot grade change from the top of the levee to the shoreline. He stated that drop is too steep for a staircase, and displayed a sketch he had put together showing a series of steps running diagonally down the slope, with a landing partway down the slope, and a landing/boat launch area at the river's edge. Mr. Vayo stated that the stairway route as sketched attempted to avoid trees as much as possible.

Jim asked for rough dimensions for the landing/launch area. Mr. Vayo replied that he had sketched an area 8 feet wide and about 110 feet long, with the last 30 feet sloping at either end. He explained that the 30-foot-long slope at either end is fairly steep, with a slope of roughly 1:12, similar to that of a shallow roof.

Mr. Vayo mentioned that he had done a little research on materials and suggested the use of a plastic geotextile material for the launch area. Kath commented that typically geotextile is used for controlling erosion and expressed concerns about maintenance over time. She suggested Mr. Vayo consider a more durable material, like concrete, which would likely incur a higher initial cost but require less maintenance.

Kath asked about public access to the launch. Mr. Vayo replied that a kayak rental business is a possibility for the community building. He also suggested that members of the public could drop off a boat at the stairway and park elsewhere on the site.

Kath commented that one concern would be about the potential of introducing an erosion process with the structure. She suggested that river velocities and ice blocks are among the factors to consider for the site.

Mr. Vayo commented that one concern is that the stairway would need some maintenance over time and who would take stewardship of it.

LMRLAC – May 23, 2013

A discussion followed on what form a boat launch could take. Mr. Vayo explained that he had reviewed the DES Web site and could not find anything specific regarding the approach he had sketched. He stated he was aware that any permanent dock is illegal. Kath mentioned that LMRLAC has reviewed and commented on applications for removable docks in the past.

Karen asked how stable the bank is along that part of the river; Mr. Vayo replied that it appears to be stable, with no obvious erosion.

Jim asked about handicap accessibility. Mr. Vayo replied that he had discussed the project with Richard Fink from NH Fish and Game, who told him the project is analogous to a hiking trail and that handicap access to the river is not feasible. Jim commented that Benson Park has a similar approach. Some of its walking paths are accessible, but other trails are not.

Mr. Vayo stated that he wants to find a way to access the water safely without damaging the environment. He wants the approach to have a 'light touch' and be durable as well. Members agreed that providing water access is value added for the project. Kath asked that the access be tied to the rest of the project as much as possible.

Kath commented that the stairway would require a wetland permit, and suggested Mr. Vayo consider presenting the Nashua Conservation Commission with an overview of the plan prior to a need for permitting.

Members discussed the possibility of a letter of support for the project. Kath commented that the idea appears reasonable in concept, but that it was difficult at this point to know what the State might permit. Kath stated that LMRLAC would need to see the specifics of the impacts from the proposed river access before considering a letter of support.

Mr. Vayo will e-mail project plans to Kath, who will forward them to the rest of the members to look over.

LMRLAC thanked Mr. Vayo for coming in and briefing the project status.

General Discussion

Corridor Layer on GIS Maps and Process for Commenting on Local Projects

Kath mentioned that Merrimack has been forwarding information to LMRLAC on projects within the corridor, and that Hudson had sent some in the past, but asked how to develop a process that could be presented to the towns so LMRLAC could receive notification from all of the member towns.

Kath stated that the corridor layer has been added to the Nashua GIS, but it is not publicly viewable. She mentioned a recent proposed asphalt recycling facility, which was turned down, as an example of a project that LMRLAC might have liked to have seen and commented on.

Jim explained that Hudson has been quiet recently. He explained that the checklist in Hudson includes items asking whether the proposed project is within the quarter-mile corridor, and whether the applicant has contacted LMRLAC to review the project. He stated the town planner signs off on the checklist, so the process does depend on staff identifying whether a project is within the corridor. Jim mentioned that NRPC put the corridor layer on the land use and environmental layer maps and those maps will get posted on the Hudson Web site.

Kath stated she would forward this information to Michael Croteau so he could look into how to add the corridor layer for Litchfield.

LMRLAC – May 23, 2013

Kath then started a brief discussion on a potential process. She suggested plans from one of the member towns could be reviewed by LMRLAC's designated primary contact for that town. She suggested that LMRLAC consider reviewing and commenting electronically, rather than waiting for the next meeting, in order to respond in a reasonable amount of time.

Kath, Jim, and Karen all agreed that a possible process may look as follows, using Hudson as an example. Kath receives project information from Hudson, and forwards it to Jim to review and respond within one week. The plans, with Jim's comments, are then distributed electronically to members with comments or questions due back within five days. This allows LMRLAC an opportunity to view plans and to provide feedback to the applicant within two weeks. Kath will draft something and send it around to members to review and comment.

Kath asked what criteria would be used to trigger LMRLAC's review of a project. Jim suggested impact is a potential item but that would not be sufficient. For example, he suggested there could be a small project with a large recreational impact, and therefore it would be good for LMRLAC to comment on it.

Kath also suggested LMRLAC look at and review the LMRLAC checklist at a future meeting.

Membership

Members briefly discussed seeking additional representation from Hudson and Litchfield. Jim stated that he will be applying for reappointment and will mention the desire for additional Hudson representation during his interview with the Board of Selectmen.

Upcoming Meetings

Members discussed continuing with the approach to only hold meetings when sufficient agenda items warrant a meeting. Kath and Karen mentioned that they both have conflicts with the June meeting date. Jim mentioned that he may have Budget Committee meetings in the fall which would conflict with LMRLAC meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Next LMRLAC Meeting

The next LMRLAC meeting is currently scheduled for Thursday, June 27, at 7:00 pm at the Nashua Public Library.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Archambault
secretary