

Members:

- ✓ = present

- Bob Robbins (Chair) – Hudson
- ✓ Kathryn Nelson (Vice Chair) -- Nashua
- ✓ Karen Archambault (Secretary) -- Nashua
- ✓ Glenn McKibben (Treasurer) – Litchfield
- Cynthia Ruonala (Public Relations) – Nashua
- ✓ George May - Merrimack
- Jim Barnes – Hudson
- ✓ Ray Peeples – Litchfield
- Stan Kazlouskas – Hudson
- ✓ Will Jewett – Litchfield

Also in attendance:

- ✓ Millie Mugica, corridor resident, Nashua

Vice Chair Kathryn Nelson called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm in the meeting room at the town offices in Litchfield. Kath indicated that Bob was on a business trip and would not be attending the meeting. Jim Barnes had e-mailed members to say he'd be at another meeting at NRPC and would not make it to LMRLAC this evening.

Minutes

February's minutes were approved with no corrections or changes.

Updates

Kath gave a summary of the status of the Green Meadows project in Hudson. There's a site walk on Thursday, March 30 at 10am. Kath plans to attend, she understands Bob hopes to attend, and Karen hopes to attend as well. Karen also mentioned that she attended part of the Hudson Conservation Commission meeting on Monday, March 20 and heard some discussion on potential mitigation parcels. Connectivity between the pedestrian access on the Exit 2 off-ramp (bridge across the Merrimack) and any trails on the parcel was brought up at the meeting as well.

Millie asked what LMRLAC's goal would be in the process for the development. Members brought up the Shoreland Protection Act and concerns about the extent of the vegetated buffer. Ray suggested that most of what happens with the plan will be driven by the Hudson Planning Board and so LMRLAC should pass its concerns on to them. Also briefly discussed was achieving a balance between vegetated river buffer and trail access.

Corridor Management Plan

Kath summarized the background for the corridor management plan update – that mitigation funding was provided to NRPC to put together an update to the corridor management plan. Danielle Fillis from NRPC had attended the February LMRLAC meeting and had put together an outline for the proposed update. Kath pointed out that the Souhegan and Lower Merrimack plans have a different focus. Ray mentioned that if the layout of the plans were consistent with one another that it would be helpful to people using them. Kath pointed out that perhaps, for example, swimming would be an activity with less focus in the lower Merrimack than in the Souhegan. She continued that a focus on access and trails map might be good for the Lower Merrimack plan, and that such data was not available for the Souhegan plan update. She continued that desired map products for the Lower Merrimack plan update should be defined

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and communicated to NRPC as soon as possible, to get the map requests in the queue for NRPC's GIS staff.

A brief discussion followed on the format of maps available and whether a map reader could be made available. Kath pointed out that this was discussed at the previous meeting, and that interactive maps were probably not realistic. The maps would need to be either paper or .PDF files on media.

Ray asked what was done and available for base layers, and mentioned that aeriels were available for both Merrimack and Litchfield, having been collected at the same time. Kath indicated that trails could be digitized. Ray indicated that a layer exists on which to add digitized trails.

The conversation returned to the differences between the Souhegan and the Lower Merrimack. George pointed out that there is probably less swimming, less fishing, and more boating in the Lower Merrimack. Glenn and Ray pointed out that there is warm water fishing, and that there is some swimming. George continued that this stretch of the lower Merrimack is free flowing and not entirely built on, just Route 3A running near the river in areas. Ray and Glenn clarified that Route 3A only approaches the river near the Litchfield Town Hall and the Library. Ray mentioned that the town of Litchfield owns quite a bit of land near the river.

Work Plan

Kath reviewed Danielle's updated work plan item by item. The first item for discussion was public outreach. George indicated that the electronic newsletter may generate more interest, and asked whether the newsletter could go on the NRPC Web page, and if so, we could distribute the link to the e-mail mailing list. We could also solicit feedback from people on the e-mail list on such things as historical stories pertaining to the corridor.

Kath indicated that the survey was the primary opportunity for public input to the plan. A brief discussion followed about such opportunities for public contact as a hearing, a charrette, or an expo, but members expressed concerns about the workload involved in hosting such an event.

Kath mentioned that PR could provide general information, for example, when the watershed audit is complete. George indicated that if the survey is still available we could have people continue to respond to it if they are interested.

Kath read from the work plan Danielle provided that the watershed audits for Merrimack, Litchfield and Hudson are complete, and she expects the audit from Nashua by the end of March.

The next discussion item was for visiting key locations on the river. The committee agreed that Danielle should contact an LAC member from each town to arrange for a tour of highlights in that town. When the visit is scheduled for a particular town, notice should be forwarded to the rest of the LAC members so they can join the tour if desired.

The next item to discuss was research on natural resource inventories, trails, etc. LAC members with information on reports, river resources, contact info should provide that information to Danielle.

Kath continued to read from the work plan. The next discussion item was the schedule to write the draft resource assessment (May 2006) and revise and approve the resource assessment in June 2006. As discussed in the February meeting, Danielle will write a chapter of the plan and submit it to Bob. Bob will in turn distribute to the LAC, and the LAC will review it in a working session at a regular meeting.

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Discussion followed on what additional public presentations would be desired, and the logistics of putting on a meeting in each town. Ray indicated that the boards in Litchfield are fairly well connected to each other and are aware of what the other boards are doing. Kath and Karen expressed some concerns about having successful attendance for a Nashua meeting.

Ray indicated that the LAC would have to sell the meeting to each town. Kath said that the meeting would need to be well structured, with questions to be answered so that the LAC came away from the meetings with results.

Ray gave the example of the CTAP (Community Technical Assistance Program) meeting for the I-93 corridor, at which there were maps all over the wall and attendees were given stickers with which to identify the top 10 items of focus or concern. He indicated that the meeting completed in under two hours and successfully collected information from about 100 attendees.

Ray also mentioned whether we could look at getting someone from Antioch New England College to possibly run such a meeting. Millie indicated that she had attended Antioch and so she could make contact with the school if needed.

Ray mentioned that the meeting should be set up in such a way that the board members would be in the audience and the LAC would run the meeting. He stated that the LAC should hold it on a non-meeting night in each community. Ray also suggested the notice for the meeting should go out 60 days in advance.

It was also suggested that the survey could be sent to the town boards again. Kath then suggested that we check with Bob on survey responses from each of the town boards to find out what was missing. Bob should also send the survey results to Danielle if he has not yet done so.

Ray will e-mail the vision map that came out of the CTAP for LAC members to see.

The discussion turned back to the table of contents and what the LAC may want to emphasize in the plan. George indicated the LAC should have a survey of all discharge points, if DES already has that information. Ray indicated there's not much for discharge points in Litchfield. It was also mentioned that, under the section on point sources of pollution, that the plan emphasize the CSO issue. Under historical resources, members commented that there are no historic mills on this part of the river, but that there are locks and landings that should be documented in that section of the plan.

George commented that the purpose of the plan is to provide an historical look at where the corridor has been, an inventory of where it is now, and a vision for the future. The LAC agreed that this summed up the goals of the plan.

Ray mentioned the concern of the sustainability of the environment along the river. Ray also indicated that the Master Plans for each town should be used to gather information on how each town sees the river.

Discussion during the meeting of the desired map products produced the following list:

- Trails and public access points within .25 miles of the river
- Conservation land
- Public land
- Threatened areas such as where sewer outfalls occur, salt use in a community, areas where fishing might be a problem, etc.
- All point-source discharge locations
- Tributaries within the corridor, with notes if something is known about the tributary

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Local Updates

Nashua: Karen indicated that the Nashua Conservation Commission attended a site walk at the Nashua Country Club, at which 15 of the 18 greens are planned for rework. Three of the greens have work within wetland buffers. Karen summarized that two of the greens are pretty much a remove and replace effort and the third enlarges a current water hazard.

Litchfield: Ray mentioned Annondale Farms, for which there have been renderings and talk of cutting along the river. The developer has indicated he intends to have the absolute minimum impact, just what is needed to do the project. George asked whether markers will be installed as part of the plan; Ray could not recall whether they were part of the plan. Ray also indicated there was some talk about a project in the Page Road/Rodonis Farms area, with mixed-use proposed. He indicated the Planning Board has not seen a plan for this project yet.

Merrimack: George attended a meeting on the Merrimack Village Dam at Merrimack Town Hall last week. He indicated that just about everyone in attendance at the meeting was in favor of removing the dam. The current focus is to get grants to perform the phase 2 study; removal would come after that. Two of the three grants have come in so far: from US Fish and Wildlife, and from Pennichuck. The grant from DES is not in yet.

George also mentioned HB1495, a bill submitted in response to a plan to site a landfill in Canterbury near an oxbow. George reminded the LAC that a letter had been sent to area representatives on the legislation. He indicated that the legislation is more complicated than it had originally appeared. He said the legislation extends the protection that exists on natural rivers to rural rivers, but the bill states that future landfills are not permitted. George is unclear on the exact impact of the bill. He also indicated that there is a petition underway against the proposed landfill. George said he would talk to Judith Spang (who proposed an amendment to the bill, which passed the House of Representatives) and to Steve Couture at DES about the bill. Ray indicated he would look into this bill as well.

George also indicated he had heard from a couple of state representatives who were interested in supporting what the LAC does.

George said the Merrimack River Watershed Council canoe trip list is now out, although he was uncertain whether the information had been posted on the Web site yet. George said the LAC is the sponsor for an August canoe trip from Reeds Ferry to Nashua and that Chuck Mower is again leading the trip.

George showed a Stormwater BMPs manual from EPA which has been sent to the LACs.

Hudson: Kath gave a recap of the Green Meadows discussion that had occurred earlier in the meeting. The interconnectedness of the trails, as a means to get somewhere, was brought up again as an item of particular interest. The committee then discussed what was to the south of the parcel for trail extension opportunities; among the parcels to the south along the river is the Pope Technical Park complex of BAE SYSTEMS. Karen commented that extending any trails through there was not likely in the current climate, and Ray mentioned that there is a guard shack on the site.

Next meeting will be held on Thursday, April 27, in Merrimack. George will line up a meeting location and inform the committee.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Archambault
secretary