

LOWER MERRIMACK RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

May 25, 2006

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
- ✓ Amy Prouty Gill, City of Nashua Division of Public Works

Vice Chair Kath Nelson called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm in the Hunt Room at the Nashua Public Library.

Minutes

Hard copies of the April minutes were handed out at the start of the meeting for those members without e-mail. After a brief discussion, it was decided that the LAC would try this approach for minutes distribution, and to alter the order of business for the meeting to approve the minutes later in the meeting, once members had had a chance to review the hard copies distributed.

City of Nashua Wet Weather Flow Treatment Facility

Amy Gill from the City of Nashua Division of Public Works was introduced to provide an overview of this project, which involves expansion of capacity at the Nashua Wastewater Treatment Facility to support wet weather flow treatment. Nashua's Wastewater Treatment Facility is at the confluence of Salmon Brook and the Merrimack River, with a railroad corridor separating the facility from the Merrimack. The expansion includes encroachment into the Shoreland Protection Act's 250-foot buffer on the Merrimack for an additional chlorine contact tank.

Amy gave an overview of the current capacity of the treatment plant and the proposed expansion. The plant handles roughly 16 million gallons per day (mgd) of sewage on a dry day, and currently has a capacity of 50 mgd. The city has 8 combined sewer overflows (CSOs), with four each along the Nashua and Merrimack rivers. Roughly one third of the city has combined sewer and storm runoff, and two thirds of the city has separated sewer and storm runoff. During 'first flush' of a storm event all the flow gets to the treatment facility. When the flow exceeds the maximum capacity of the facility, one or more of the CSOs are triggered and the overflow discharges a combination of sewage and storm water into its water body. During overnight CSO events, the combined flow could contain about 5% raw waste. Daytime CSO events could have a higher percentage of waste in them – up to 15-20%.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had put the City of Nashua under a consent order to reduce its CSOs. The initial approach taken was to separate storm water from sewage, and the city had completed 5 large projects toward that end. Then the EPA had determined that

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stormwater was a significant source of pollutants to water bodies, and indicated that stormwater should receive treatment. Therefore, Nashua changed its plan and decided to design a wet weather treatment facility that would increase the total capacity of the Wastewater Treatment Facility to 110 mgd – the existing 50 mgd receiving its current level of treatment, and up to 60 mgd to be routed through the new wet weather treatment. This capacity was selected to handle up to a 2-year flow; the focus is still on capturing and treating the first flush of stormwater runoff.

Discussion briefly turned to the recent flooding event and how the CSOs performed during the event. Amy indicated that all 8 of the CSOs had activated during the storm. She explained that, in general, the CSO near the Taylor's Falls Bridge and the CSO on Canal Street are the two that activate most frequently.

Members asked about the possibility of a tour of the treatment plant. Amy indicated that tours are possible and Kath indicated she would coordinate with Amy.

The Wet Weather Flow Treatment expansion being proposed has to be completed by January 2009 under the EPA consent order. The design is complete and the effort is going through its permitting process and going out to bid for construction.

The expansion will implement a second treatment process for up to 60 mgd. The wet weather flow will be pumped to a new pumping station and flow to the sedimentation facility for flocculent treatment. The wet weather flow is proposed to be used about 12 times per year. During wet weather, up to 50 mgd will still undergo the existing treatment through the wastewater treatment facility. Up to 60 mgd beyond that will go through the wet weather flow treatment. The wet weather flow treatment, consisting of flocculation (binding and settling of solids) and chlorination, is not as extensive as the treatment that the 50 mgd undergoes, but it does provide more treatment than what currently exists (i.e. none) when the CSOs discharge directly to the rivers. Organics and solids get settled out by the flocculation, some nitrogen and phosphorus are removed, and the chlorine treatment takes care of bacteria.

The intent of the wet weather flow facility is to reduce the frequency and the volume of the CSOs in Nashua.

The revised EPA consent order has 12 projects on its list. The wet weather flow facility is the largest item on the list. This is the first facility of its type being constructed in the US. Two currently exist in Europe.

Alternatives were discussed. Towns can continue to separate stormwater from sanitary waste, but then every discharge point requires treatment. Other towns in the area (Merrimack, for example) were mentioned as continuing with the separation approach.

Nashua has 500 total outfalls (direct discharges to water bodies), the bulk of which are public outfalls. There is an estimated 100 million dollars in savings to Nashua taxpayers in constructing the wet weather flow facility to treat stormwater, rather than continuing with separation.

Kath asked whether the LAC could receive information on the CSO flows. Amy indicated that Nashua now has telemetry data available to City employees via computer. She will discuss the matter with the Director of Public Works and look into whether information could be made available to the LAC.

Kath pointed out that recent sampling performed by NRWA indicated low e. coli levels at the Mine Falls Park boat ramp and near BAE SYSTEMS on Canal Street.

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Discussion again turned to the recent storm event. Amy indicated that Nashua was 'close' to having to shut down the treatment plant, since the treated flow could barely discharge to the Merrimack River. The outfall pipe is situated (elevation and angle) for the 100 year storm.

Amy also pointed out that the plant produces enough methane to provide all onsite electricity needs, and has to burn off the excess.

Discussion returned to the project at hand. Kath asked whether some revegetation opportunities existed to enhance the buffer between the new chlorination tank and the river. Amy will check with Nick Caggiano of the Nashua Park and Recreation Department for ideas on shrubs or other plantings that may enhance vegetation for wildlife. The committee thanked Amy for her time and detailed presentation.

After Amy left, George stated how helpful her presentation had been and how pleased he was to have Amy come to discuss the plans in person. Kath responded that she had invited Amy to come in to discuss the project, and encouraged members from other towns to invite applicants in to discuss their projects as they come up.

Kath made a motion that the LAC is in support of Nashua's wet weather flow treatment project, with a recommendation for wildlife enhancing native plants. George seconded, and the motion passed. Kath will write up the comments and submit to DES. Kath will also check on setting up a tour of the facility, perhaps in combination with the Nashua Conservation Commission's upcoming tour, and to follow up on receiving CSO report data from Nashua DPW. George suggested that the CSO data could be something for the newsletter, with permission to do so from Nashua's DPW.

Minutes

Will made the motion, Jim seconded, and the minutes of April 27, 2006, were approved without changes.

Policy of Scheduling Meetings – Nashua

Kath explained the Nashua Public Library's new policy of a lottery system to provide access to meeting space. This policy became necessary due to budget constraints, including the closing of the Chandler branch library. The LAC will get notice no later than June 1 on the results of the lottery. If the LAC does win a spot at the library for meeting space, the start time of the meetings in Nashua would have to change. Available time slots will be 5:30-7 pm and 7:30-9 pm. Kath applied for the 7:30-9 pm time slot for LMRLAC.

NRPC meeting

Kath explained that she and Bob Robbins met with NRPC's Assistant Director Kerrie Diers, Danielle Fillis, and Steve Couture from DES at NRPC on Wednesday May 24. The corridor plan schedule and progress was discussed – the LAC reminded Danielle to be proactive for scheduling town tours. Danielle indicated that her schedule in June was very open. Kath indicated the meeting was very productive to voice concerns, requesting more involvement from Danielle. She had a hard copy of the update to the corridor management plan outline. Steve Couture indicated that he is willing to come to Nashua once a month to meet with Danielle and a corridor management plan subcommittee at NRPC to continue progress on the plan. NRPC is committed to implementing the plan, but not to providing administrative support to the LAC. There will be opportunities to seek grant funding from DES. It was also discussed meetings which included meeting with Danielle to discuss the corridor management plan might be held at the NRPC offices in Nashua.

Dates for river tours in each town were discussed and scheduled as follows:

Merrimack: Thursday, June 8, 6-8 pm. Meet at the fire station on DW Highway, near Abbotts Market

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Litchfield: Tuesday, June 13, 6-8pm. Meet at the Moores Falls conservation area on Route 3A in the north end of town. Going north on 3A, look for the kiosk and parking area. If you see Corning Road, you've gone too far.

Nashua: Thursday, June 22, 6-8pm. Meet in the library parking lot. A meeting will follow the tour as time permits.

Hudson: Thursday, July 27, 6-8 pm. Meet at the town hall parking lot.

Updates

Cynthia did speak to Nick Caggiano of Nashua Park and Recreation about the Greeley Park boat ramp. He indicated that the City of Nashua and the State Fish and Game department are in agreement on making improvements to the ramp, but have not yet received any response from the railroad on the crossing.

Jim indicated that there has been no new information on the Green Meadow project. Jim also said he will be unable to attend the June LMRLAC meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9pm.

Next meeting will be Thursday, June 22 at the Nashua Library as time permits after the Nashua river tour. Other river tour dates and meeting places are as indicated earlier in the minutes.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Archambault
secretary