

LMRLAC – January 24, 2013

LOWER MERRIMACK RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

January 24, 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
Bob Robbins – Hudson
David Scaer – Hudson

Pending Renewal:

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

Associate Members:

Mildred Mugica – Nashua

Also in attendance:

Geoff Daly, Nashua, corridor resident

The meeting was called to order at 7:10pm in the Music/Art/Media room of the Nashua Public Library by Chair Kath Nelson.

Minutes

The minutes from the meeting of December 6, 2012 were approved.

New Business

Proposed Longa Gravel site restoration project, Merrimack

Kath stated that she had been contacted by the attorney for the Longa family about restoration planned for their 50-plus-year-old gravel site in Merrimack. Kath had responded requesting plans for the restoration but has not yet received a response. No application has been filed thus far with DES.

Nelson gave some background on the location. He stated it has been an active gravel pit since approximately 1950 and believes the site is likely grandfathered as far as reclamation is concerned. He also commented that a part of it was, at one time, a town dump. He suggested that the primary factor for the site restoration is the planned future use.

Jim asked how the site was zoned; Nelson replied that it is multi-use.

Kath asked whether there were any informal trails on the site. George replied that there are trails, and that he believes there is trail access to the site from Watson Park. Nelson commented that it may also abut, or nearly so, Twin Bridge Park (site of the Merrimack Youth Association building). George stated his view that as many trails as possible should be preserved on the site. Nelson suggested that the trails be either preserved or relocated.

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George suggested there could be boat access at the site, but access to it would require a railroad crossing. George also thought there was swimming there at one time, and that there were seaplane landings on the river there, perhaps in the 1960s.

Kath asked for suggestions on how to communicate LMRLAC's thoughts on the site. Nelson suggested expressing LMRLAC's interest in the site and that LMRLAC is interested in giving feedback as part of the review and comment process. George also suggested a comment about the trails on the site. Nelson mentioned that the Planning Board does keep trails in mind and where the trails go depends on the site use. He pointed out that some uses may not be compatible with public access to trails.

Mr. Daly asked about an application LMRLAC recently saw near the site which had a trail easement marked on its plans. (GI Stone, just south of the mouth of the Souhegan, applied for an Alteration of Terrain permit in 2009). Nelson replied that he recalls the plan was approved, or nearly so, but was not implemented.

Kath suggested LMRLAC look at the NRPC trail inventory to see what it shows for trails or recommendations in that area.

Nelson stated that shoreland protection and stormwater runoff to the river are additional areas of concern. Members briefly discussed the current Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act. Kath mentioned that there is proposed legislation entering the review process which looks to strengthen the act. Kath reminded members that information on the current SWQPA is available on the DES Web site.

Kath suggested including a comment to encourage use of LID techniques on the site. After further discussion, it was agreed to hold off on LID-specific comments until LMRLAC has information on what is proposed for the site.

In summary, LMRLAC's comments include the following:

- Expressing interest in seeing plans for the site and in providing feedback as part of the process
- Interest in recreational trails on the site and the role of those trails in connecting two existing parks
- Shoreland protection and maintaining or reducing stormwater runoff to the Merrimack River

Kath will contact the Longa family attorney with LMRLAC's comments about the site.

604(b) Grant for River Continuity Assessment

Members discussed what form a presentation to the communities would take. Nelson stated that education is a good use of LMRLAC's energy, to educate Planning Boards on what LMRLAC does and why.

Mr. Daly commented that one of the culvert assessment trainers suggested that any time a culvert is replaced it should be sized larger than required due to the expected effects of climate change. Nelson commented that the increased sizes would have to be in the regulations in order for Planning Boards to require them.

Jim pointed out that the whole system must be considered, since increasing the size of a single culvert can cause trouble at other culverts downstream.

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Kath read from a flyer for an upcoming stream crossing workshop in Massachusetts which she suggested could be a template for the kind of workshop LMRLAC could put together. Members discussed partnering with NRPC, UNH, or Trout Unlimited to conduct a workshop. She stated that the scope of the workshop in the flyer is probably beyond LMRLAC's capabilities, but LMRLAC could take some initial steps along the same lines.

Members briefly discussed whether to work on a presentation or a workshop, and decided to focus initially on a presentation.

Jim mentioned that NRPC is in the process of updating its town map sets, with separate streets, environment, land use, and zoning maps. He stated the Hudson map is available on the NRPC Web site and has incredible detail. Jim suggested LMRLAC ask NRPC for an updated corridor map. Nelson agreed, and said it could be used as part of the presentation.

Discussion turned to what should be the focus and content of the presentation. It was suggested that the presentation summarize who LMRLAC is, what it does, and what it is trying to protect, followed by specific examples – in this case, the culvert assessment project.

Members discussed targeting the presentation for Planning Boards. Jim suggested making the information available to town engineers as well. George suggested inviting the Conservation Commissions. Kath commented that having joint meetings with the towns would reduce or avoid having to present at multiple meetings in the towns.

Kath suggested the culvert assessment information be packaged in a way that is more targeted to each town. Kath suggested that LMRLAC start the presentation and then turn it over to NRPC, who would present the slides and handouts. NRPC could also better field questions about the project, such as what the State plans to do with the data.

George asked why it would be useful to have NRPC in to give the presentation. Kath replied that NRPC could give more background on the report specifics, and would provide the slides prepared with specific culvert photographs for that town.

Members discussed whether to have NRPC prepare the presentation. LMRLAC could put together a presentation, but would need a copy of the report data, maps, and photographs. The presentation would probably be of a lower quality than what NRPC could put together and it would take time for one or more members to develop it.

Members decided to work on making presentations to each of the member towns over the next year, and decided to ask NRPC for an electronic copy of the report materials to use to put together presentations.

Members briefly discussed how the presentation relates to how LMRLAC may want to change or expand its relationship with the towns, with the intent to have an opportunity to see projects near the river that LMRLAC would not otherwise see.

Jim mentioned that Hudson includes an item on its checklist on whether the project is in the quarter-mile corridor.

George suggested he feels the Public Works Department in each town already knows where the culverts are and where the problem culverts are. Kath agreed, but that the list of problem culverts might not include a focus on fish passage.

Nelson suggested the presentation to each town include information on LMRLAC comments on projects in that town over the past five years.

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George asked whether LMRLAC minutes and agendas currently go to the towns. Karen replied that the draft minutes are distributed after the meeting to a point of contact in the Planning Department in each town. Kath stated that the meeting date and time is posted on the NRPC Web site but that the agenda is generally not distributed.

Kath will contact Jill at NRPC, asking for an updated corridor map and how LMRLAC could get an electronic copy of the culvert assessment report data.

General Discussion Annual Report

Kath stated she had written the LMRLAC 2012 Annual Report and sent it to Litchfield and Hudson.

Canoe Trips

George mentioned that the Souhegan Watershed Association is planning a series of canoe trips this year and there are 3-4 of them on LMRLAC's stretch of the Merrimack.

Water Quality Testing

George stated he is trying to come up with a clean test when dropping a sample bottle off a bridge. Mr. Daly recommended George look into the Nansen water bottle, which rotates and seals itself when pulled out.

George also mentioned that the MRWC received the grant that Tracie Sales had applied for last year for water quality testing. George mentioned that there will be two HOBOS placed in the Souhegan and two in the Merrimack this year. For the Merrimack River, George stated he is considering locations near Goff's Falls and near the Taylor's Falls Bridge. He asked for suggestions on how to install them and how to access them to read the data.

Kath commented that she lost a data logger once. The logger was wired to a cinder block, but a storm dislodged it and washed it away. George replied that he's worried not only about that, but also about accidental or deliberate vandalism.

Kath said she has contact information on a couple of individuals who have some experience deploying data loggers and that she will pass that along to George.

Mr. Daly suggested the old railroad supports just downstream of the Taylor's Falls Bridge might be a place to deploy. George replied that he'd need a boat to access that site.

Snow Dumping

Mr. Daly mentioned seeing snow being dumped in Hudson into the Merrimack River and asked who to contact about that. It was suggested he start by contacting John Cashell, who should be able to direct him to the correct person.

Designated River Signage

George commented that he would still like to put up Designated River signs on the Taylor's Falls and Sagamore bridges.

Members briefly discussed the undesignated portion of the Merrimack River between the Upper and Lower designated sections, and what would be involved in adding that portion, either to the Lower Merrimack designation or as a designation of its own. George stated that water quality monitoring occurs from above the Amoskeag Dam to the Tyngsborough bridge.

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Brochure

Kath asked if members had ideas about who might design and print a LMRLAC brochure. George suggested a high school class might help. Mr. Daly suggested Ace Printing in Nashua, and offered to contact them to get an idea of the cost.

Kath suggested members consider what sort of content the brochure should have. If the brochure contains dated information, then about a year's worth of brochures would be an appropriate print run. If the brochure is more general, without potentially dated information, then a larger print run would make sense.

Upcoming Meetings

Kath commented members should expect to discuss plans for the Longa gravel site at the next meeting. She also requested members bring ideas for the presentation, and to give some thought to what speakers could be invited to future meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Next LMRLAC Meeting

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

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Archambault
secretary