

LOWER MERRIMACK RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

December 8, 2005

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:

None

Chair Bob Robbins called the meeting to order at 7:25 pm in the Merrimack Town Hall Selectman's office. Upon Jim's arrival, it was noted that a quorum was present.

Minutes

October's minutes were approved with the correction to provide Chris Rueggeberg's contact information in lieu of attaching a copy of a sample ordinance.

Updates

Bob indicated that Will Jewett had called him to say he would miss this evening's meeting. Bob also indicated that LMRLAC had received correspondence that DES has hired another staff member for lakes and rivers. The e-mail address is lweit@des.state.nh.us and should be added to LMRLAC distribution in addition to Steve Couture's e-mail.

Bob showed a check for \$500.00 that the LAC had received from Citigroup Foundation, recognizing Bob's volunteer efforts. George took a picture of Bob handing the check to Karen, to be included in a press release about the LAC receiving the check.

Old Business – Corridor Management Plan Updates

Kath brought a packing carton roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ full with survey responses. During the course of the meeting, several members opened surveys and noted some comments that stood out. Bob estimated that LMRLAC had received about a 20% response to the survey. The random drawing from the survey respondents for a restaurant gift certificate was held. Bob will contact the winner and then LMRLAC will submit a press release with a photograph to announce the winner.

In addition to the mailed-in survey responses, responses were handed in from the Nashua Department of Public Works, Nashua Conservation Commission, and Nashua ZBA. Bob reminded LAC members to follow through on their assignments to distribute surveys and gather responses from town officials in the member towns. Jim indicated that he has not received any feedback from the Hudson Planning Board but that he would try again at the next meeting.

Discussion followed on how to compile the survey results. Bob indicated he would look into getting an intern from St. Anselm's or Rivier College to do this. The committee also discussed how the e-mail addresses (from survey respondents who supplied them) could best be used. Among the ideas discussed were to make an e-mail list for distribution of the minutes, press releases and announcements, or perhaps for an e-mail newsletter. Kath suggested the committee could also generate a press release to solicit e-mails for people to be added to the list, since the survey went to a targeted audience (town officials, residents within the river corridor).

Bob mentioned that one of the purposes of the survey was to collect a list of people interested in potentially participating in LAC or other river-related activities.

Bob will contact Danielle Fillis at NRPC and request she attend the February LMRLAC meeting to provide a status update on the Corridor Management Plan, an updated work plan, a recommendation from the LAC that she pursue a watershed audit for the plan, and a summary of the remaining funding for the plan update.

Local Updates

Hudson: Bob asked Jim to give an overview of the proposed development on the site of the Green Meadow golf course. Jim described that the presentation at the Hudson Planning Board on Wednesday evening was for informational purposes; no plan (even a conceptual one) has been submitted yet. There had been some concerns expressed by the public about a lack of public involvement in the discussions thus far. Some meetings have been held with town officials, DOT, and DES to discuss the proposal.

Jim drew a sketch of the proposed development. He indicated that the development would affect the 370 acres currently occupied by the golf courses. The proposal includes mostly retail buildings and some office space, with possibly a hotel and restaurants. The developer has been involved in mall development in the past (examples: Hingham (MA) Mall, possibly the Pheasant Lane Mall in Nashua). The proposal includes access off the Exit 2 off-ramp. Residential development is proposed along the river, but Jim didn't think that part of the plan sounded realistic. Jim estimates that the project would require roughly 1 year to go through the approval process, and somewhere between 5-10 years to build. Phase 1 of the project would include all the infrastructure, with discussions about traffic, roads, water, sewer, etc.

Jim also indicated that there was discussion of a possible wharf or boat dock for river access, which he understands would involve the Army Corps of Engineers in the review process. Bob suggested that the developer get in touch with the State Fish and Game department about a potential boat dock.

When asked about Shoreland Protection Act issues, Jim indicated that this would be an issue but that the project is not far enough along to discuss that yet.

Kath indicated her concerns about the river bank – that DES jurisdiction is just to the top of the bank. Kath indicated that her preference for any walkway along the river would be to have it located roughly 20' back from the top of the bank. Kath also expressed her concerns about how plans can often change from the initial concept to the final design.

George indicated that Betsy Hahn at NRPC would be a good resource for possible location of trails in conjunction with the project.

Jim indicated there will be a series of workshops with the Hudson Planning Board. Kath asked if the LAC could be on distribution for information about this project. Jim indicated that any concerns, questions, etc, be sent John Cashell, the Hudson town planner, by December 21, and he will forward them to the developer. Jim indicated he would provide John Cashell's e-mail

address to Bob so Bob could contact John. Jim also provided Bob with contact information for the developer.

Bob expressed concerns about the parking lots that would be needed on the parcel and indicated the LAC should express a desire that LID principles be used for the development.

A brief discussion of the contents of the LAC communication followed. It was suggested that we start by introducing ourselves, describe our purpose and the current task of updating the corridor management plan, and follow up with a more detailed contact of our concerns and issues next month. Then it was determined that the LAC should invite the project manager to an upcoming meeting to discuss the plan. Kath suggested that the Hudson Conservation Commission could also be invited to the meeting. Jim indicated that he's certain there will be wetlands impacts as a result of this development.

One survey response was noted with a comment that the writer had concerns about poor communication from the dam in Lowell. George responded that this has been an issue for years; that the firm in control of the dam has a specific list of contacts to which it distributes its information. George also indicated that the LAC ought to know about the river level as an important concern for river monitoring volunteers.

George brought up the subject of an upcoming grant application for dam removal on the Souhegan near its mouth at the Merrimack, and asked whether the LAC wished to comment on the issue. The dam is owned by Pennichuck Water Works, which currently has a grant to perform a dam removal study under a Phase 2 grant. Pennichuck wants to pursue dam removal funds prior to the completion of the study, anticipating that the study will support removal of the dam. The grant would be contingent on the survey result lining up with that. Reasons to remove the dam include for fish passage and a desire to remove dam liability.

Removal of the dam opens up a 14-mile stretch of the Souhegan River for fish. In particular, it is believed that removal of the dam will provide habitat for 5000 shad. The Souhegan is currently a trout fishing 'put and take' location. Shad would provide fly fishing opportunities.

Bob asked if there was an issue for abutters. George responded that there's not much of an issue – that PSNH owns much of the land on one side, and the school districts owns on the other side. Kath indicated that the wetlands behind the fire station would probably diminish.

Summary of action items as a result of this meeting:

- George will generate a letter to come from the LAC about the dam at the mouth of the Souhegan River
- Bob will contact Hudson's planner about the Green Meadows proposed development, will contact the survey response gift certificate winner, and will line up an intern to process the survey responses
- Bob will also contact Danielle to request an updated/revised work plan for the corridor plan, to suggest a watershed audit, a funding status, and a status on the corridor management plan update, and the process for reappointment to the LAC

A brief discussion followed about the process for reappointment to the LAC. Bob's appointment is up in June of 2006. After some discussion as to whether the members just go through DES for the reappointment, or if they have to be reappointed by their municipality, it was decided that this question be added to Bob's list of items to discuss with Danielle.

Next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 26, at 7:00pm in the Hunt Room at the Nashua Public Library.

Meeting adjourned at 9:08pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Archambault
secretary