

LOWER MERRIMACK RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

October 27, 2005

Members:

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- ✓ 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:

- ✓ Chris Rueggeberg, Citizens for Sludge-Free Land (CSFR)

Chair Bob Robbins called the meeting to order at 7:09 pm in the Hunt room at the Nashua Library. It was noted that a quorum was present.

Minutes

September's minutes were approved.

Guest Speaker

The evening's guest speaker, Chris Rueggeberg from Citizens for Sludge-Free Land, was introduced. Chris handed around a packet of information for the members to review, including a sample sludge and septage ordinance for corridor towns to consider for adoption. Information may be obtained by contacting Chris at rcrlobby@totalnetnh.net. The organization's Web site is www.sludgefacts.org.

Chris explained how Citizens for Sludge-Free Land is a nonprofit organization involved in advocacy and their current focus is to raise local awareness of sludge and septage issues because of changes at the state level. Chris indicated that DES is in the process of adopting new septage rules – encouraging innovative alternative technologies without any definition of same, discussion of training, or bonding. DES is in the process of rewriting the sludge rules – now called biosolids. One proposal would permit the spreading of biosolids with as little as a 35' setback from the high water mark on designated rivers.

The discussion turned to whether there were any specific locations within the corridor where sludge could be spread at a distance of less than 250' of the river. Members pointed out that the eastern bank (Litchfield and Hudson) is steep, and the western bank (Merrimack and Nashua) gets a buffer by the presence of the railroad line along the river.

Chris asked about tributaries to the Merrimack and whether there were sludge-spreading opportunities along them. Bob indicated that perhaps there were but that it was out of the area of focus for the LAC.

Jim indicated that in most instances a homeowner would not be spreading sludge but Chris replied that the bill would allow bags of organite.

Bob summarized that as a practical matter the matter of spreading sludge does not appear to be an issue in the Lower Merrimack.

Glenn indicated that Litchfield has a couple of active farms which are growing food. Some are using manure; others, organic manure. He doesn't see any of them being a problem.

Chris indicated that people do use sludge on agricultural land and cited examples of farms in California who use it on carrots or strawberries, for example. He indicated that DRED likes to use it in forest areas, golf courses, farmland, parks, reclamation sites, landfills.

Chris indicated that the use of sludge in landfills makes sense. He used the term 'bioreactive landfills', describing how the sludge can work to break down landfill material, generating methane in the process, which in turn can be used to generate electricity.

Bob indicated the idea of a local ordinance is preventive in case DES goes for a lesser buffer than what's currently provided (which is 250').

Chris gave a description of class A and class B waste – class A has been treated more than class B, but class A concentrates heavy metals, for example.

Chris indicated that CSFR is concerned that part of the motivation behind the legislation is that if the standards on sludge/septage are relaxed, this may lead people to conclude that sludge is not a bad thing.

Chris cited from a Cornell study which documented 300 cases around the country of sludge-related problems, 61 of which were in New Hampshire, and Chris outlined one instance of a young man who died in Greenland after class B sludge was spread near his home.

Chris indicated that the issue of sludge can be handled in several ways in town ordinances – as a health ordinance or as a zoning issue were two examples.

Glenn asked whether Cooperative Extension was involved in the matter. Chris replied that they remain neutral on the issue.

Chris listed that among the undesirable items contained in sludge are pathogens, bacteria, flame retardants, heavy metals, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals from waste water treatment plants.

Chris pointed out that large waste water treatment plants are only required to test their sludge once per month.

Bob wondered whether LMRLAC should request a presentation from someone at the Nashua Waste Water Treatment plant on how they treat waste, how they test it, etc.

Glenn mentioned that Merrimack stockpiles its sludge near the river, mixes it with wood chips, and that Merrimack residents can get it for free. Chris pointed out that Merrimack actively markets its sludge to whoever will take it.

Glenn pointed out that Litchfield has a regulation on stockpiling manure – that it has to be out of the floodplain.

Jim asked what the difference was between sludge and septage. Chris replied that septage is household waste.

Chris mentioned that DES treats class A sludge as clean enough so as not to require regulation.

Jim asked where the 250' distance came from. Chris replied that it was the distance selected by the legislature in the 1980s.

Cynthia asked if there's a potential problem with breathing sludge. Chris replied that airborne particles can indeed be a problem.

Chris pointed out that DES has never studied the economics of whether it's cheaper to put sludge in landfills. He again pointed out how landfills can use sludge to produce methane and in turn produce electricity. He pointed out that Pennsylvania is producing a fair amount of its electricity from landfills, and that there was a study in Canada to use the sludge to produce electricity right at the treatment plant.

Chris mentioned that the firm Resource Management, Inc. has a \$2 million contract to find uses for sludge on farms.

Cynthia mentioned how she had tried to find out how to best get rid of expired medications in Nashua and was told to flush the medications. Jim asked whether the NRPC hazardous waste collection included medicines; other members indicated it did not.

Chris concluded his presentation around 8:15 and the LAC members thanked him for his information.

Survey

Bob indicated that he had mailed the postcards last month and the surveys this month. He said that very few postcards came back so the mailing list was in good shape overall.

Bob indicated he made the survey three pages for the mailing, with each question on a separate page, to make it easier to process responses.

Bob asked about responses from local boards, and encouraged all LAC members to follow through with their assignments to get on the agendas of boards in their towns to get survey results from board members.

Updates

Litchfield: Glenn indicated that there's been a lot of access work to the site at the north end of town.

Hudson: Jim indicated there has been prep work at the senior housing project near the river. He said the housing development to the north of the senior housing has had some erosion and drainage problems. Bob asked about requested markers on the projects; Jim replied that the markers will be going in later and their presence/placement would be monitored by the Planning Department.

Nashua: Karen indicated the site walk being held on Friday, October 28 at the Hampshire Chemical site. She believed that most of the site demolition work was complete but would be able to provide more information after the site walk. Karen also mentioned that she had not yet seen further information on the Thoreau's Landing erosion situation. Karen also summarized the erosion situation at the Nashua CSO outfall near the Nashua Country Club. She indicated that Amy Gill (Nashua DPW) is working on issues of ownership and responsibility for the repair (it involves the City, the Country Club, the railroad). The outfall is sunken, and there's significant erosion to within about 15 feet (Karen's estimate) of the railroad tracks. Karen indicated how Amy planned for a short-term fix and expected to be making more permanent repairs in the spring of 2006. Jim asked if the fiber optic cables were live and who owned them. Karen indicated she didn't know if they were live, but the owners were AT&T and MCI.

Bob mentioned a conservation parcel in Hudson that abuts Londonderry Town Forest land. Bob indicated that there have been barriers placed to prevent ATVers from using the parcel and that

dumping was taking place there – it is believed in retaliation for the barriers. Bob wondered who would be responsible for cleaning up. Jim indicated that it would probably be the Highway Department; Glenn indicated the Police Department should also be contacted to see if they can catch the people dumping.

Next meeting will be held on Thursday, December 8, at 7:00pm in the Selectman's Office in Merrimack, which is located at the Town Offices in Merrimack on Baboosic Lake Road.

Meeting adjourned at 8:42pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Archambault
secretary