

LMRLAC – December 4, 2008

LOWER MERRIMACK RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

December 4, 2008

Members:

- ✓ = present

- ✓ Bob Robbins (Chair) – Hudson
- ✓ Kathryn Nelson (Vice Chair) -- Nashua
- ✓ Karen Archambault (Secretary) -- Nashua
- ✓ Jim Barnes (Treasurer) – Hudson
- Glenn McKibben – Litchfield
- George May - Merrimack
- Stan Kazlouskas – Hudson

Associate Members:

- ✓ Millie Mugica – Nashua

Also in attendance:

- ✓ Minda Shaheen, NRPC
- ✓ Lucy St. John, planner, City of Nashua

The meeting was called to order at 7:10pm at Margaritas.

Old Business

Recreation Plan

Minda gave some background on the Recreation Plan. It was started in 2006 as the result of a 604b grant to address 2 objectives in the original Corridor Management Plan: to increase awareness of public access points in the corridor, and to develop a continuous trail network within the corridor. In 2007 and 2008 the information was gathered and Appendix B of the plan has a spreadsheet listing attributes of existing trail segments. Minda stated that letters were sent to all landowners with trail segments about the plan, looking for feedback. NRPC only received three responses and all were negative about public access on their property, based on negative experiences those owners have had in the past.

Minda indicated there is another version of the plan that is being put together. She is currently processing Laura Weit's comments about the plan. Kath asked Minda to forward those comments to LMRLAC members. Members offered some suggestions for the modified version of the plan that is coming out. Kath suggested that the segment numbers be more visible on the maps.

Members discussed what could be done to change the negative view some people have of trails – how to involve the community to keep the trails clean and to secure the trail area for positive uses, rather than negative ones. Members also discussed how to designate or define a 'social trail' versus a public trail – i.e. neighborhood use or use by the general public.

Minda suggested the next step might be a demonstration project of some sort– to take some landowners to an existing trail to show them how it can be successful. When asked how LMRLAC might spread the message of a trail in the river corridor, Minda suggested the Heritage Trail is probably the best asset.

Bob asked about posting the Recreation Plan on the Web site. Minda responded that the existing trail segments are disjointed and summarized concerns about liability issues and the

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sensitive nature of publicizing a disjointed trail network. She indicated the plan is public information and will be available to the public for review but will not be advertised.

Several issues related to trails in general and trails along the river were discussed, including how to raise awareness and public support for trails. Lucy pointed out it's been her experience in the past that people often don't know trails exist, even when they've lived in the community for a long time. She recommends getting the word out through the schools as a way to make trails more widely known. Millie mentioned the No Child Left Inside initiative as a tie-in to publicizing trails, and Lucy mentioned the Safe Routes to Schools program. Kath suggested coordinating with Conservation Commissions in the member towns.

In response to a question about what trails were mapped with GPS, Minda indicated that the bank shelf was not mapped. She mentioned issues with access to the shelf trails, and the sensitivity of the bank due to possible erosion.

Bob pointed out that there are several trails near the Sagamore Bridge in south Nashua that did not appear on the map in the first draft of the Recreation Plan.

Members also briefly discussed the issue of easements and how easement information can be lost over time. A trail easement, when granted, is recorded on the property deed, but tracking down easements in later years requires research to find them again.

Members also discussed the Heritage Trail and its history. Minda mentioned that she had called Jennifer Codispoti at the state Trails Bureau looking for information the Heritage Trail. Jennifer gave Minda some general background on the Heritage Trail; Minda will put together what information there was. Minda said she had also been in contact with Paul Wiggins, who is trying to get the Heritage Trail project going again.

Members discussed what might be the next steps. Minda suggested that the desire for a trail system along the river should be reflected in the Master Plan for each town. Members also discussed degrees of detail between the overall concept or desire for a trail, and details on the proposed trail location and design specifications. Members agreed that the goal is to 'connect the dots' of the existing trail segments, and that we need to figure out how to make that happen. Kath suggested that the Planning Board or Conservation Commission in each member town needs to identify the land along the river as a priority for land protection/trail use.

Minda pointed out that, because there are concerns about having a trail in the river corridor, getting a trail to happen requires both working with the Planning Boards to request easements to make a trail happen, and working with landowners to work through their issues and concerns about trails on their land.

Kath pointed out that subdivisions provide an opportunity to get trail easements, and also asked whether members were in agreement that the trail probably goes on the eastern side of the river. Members generally agreed that the eastern bank has several stretches of 'shelf' that provide opportunities for a trail, and the western bank does not have a comparable shelf area, and has the railroad. Kath also suggested that perhaps we should look into scheduling a meeting with the four member towns discussing such issues as open space and a trail network along the river.

Members briefly discussed how trails can go hand in hand with other kinds of easements – for example, with gas pipe easements. Members also briefly discussed what kind of information could be added to the Web site about trails along the river – for example, public access points that do exist, number of parking spots at those points.

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Corridor Management Plan – Merrimack Planning Board Presentation

Bob briefly summarized the presentation he gave to the Merrimack Planning Board on November 18. He stated one member had taken the time to read the plan on the Web site and came prepared with questions about the plan. Bob also mentioned how he has gotten feedback from Hudson and Merrimack from people who saw the LMRLAC presentations on cable TV. Bob mentioned one person who spoke with him was Chris Christensen from Merrimack, who is a state legislator. Bob also mentioned that he put in a membership plug during the presentation.

Local Updates

Hudson – 32 Executive Drive – building expansion

Jim indicated the plans for this site have been changed. The building is not being expanded toward the river now. Jim also mentioned that access to the river from this particular site is not feasible, as there is a 40' drop on the site to the river. The easement on this site is located on the shelf on the bank.

Hudson – Lindquist Plan

Jim also mentioned there had been a change to the Lindquist plan where the easement was removed from the old/existing lot but left on the three new lots.

Hudson – Planning Board Plan Presentation

Jim handed out copies of the goals and objectives that had been reviewed by the Hudson Planning Board. Jim highlighted a few of the responses:

- The Hudson Planning Board's response to LMRLAC's suggestion for periodic meetings was to schedule LMRLAC to attend its June 3, 2009 meeting
- In response to identifying farmlands, the Hudson Planning Board tossed this back to LMRLAC to make some recommendations. Minda mentioned that NRPC has a map of lands identified as 'agricultural lands'
- The Hudson Planning Board is looking for training materials for CSPA and the Heritage Trail. Minda indicated CSPA materials are available on the NRPC Web site. Minda will write up what she learned about the Heritage Trail and make it available.
- The Hudson Web site will be recommended to include a link to NRPC/LMRLAC.

LMRLAC thanks Hudson for the time spent reviewing the goals and objectives. Kath requested an electronic copy of the responses and Jim indicated he would send it to her. Kath asked if Minda could attend the 6-3-09 Hudson meeting.

Nashua – Planning Board Review of Plan

Lucy indicated that a discussion of the corridor management plan is on the Nashua Planning Board agenda for December 11. Lucy plans to ask that a subcommittee be formed to review the goals and objectives

LID Guidebook

Minda mentioned that the 604b grant proposal to put together an LID guidebook was approved.

Membership

Members discussed putting a letter together to send to the board of selectmen in Litchfield and Merrimack, pointing out the fact there is minimal active representation from their towns. The letter would include a request for an ad plugging LMRLAC and looking for membership on the town's cable station and/or Web site.

Kath asked whether we could look into getting LMRLAC meetings on the public meeting list in the Nashua Telegraph. This led to a brief discussion about putting together a press release

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about the recreation plan. The release would state that the plan is available for review at the NRPC offices.

Minutes

The minutes for the October 23, 2008, minutes were approved with a few wording changes submitted since the first draft had been distributed.

Miscellaneous

Members voted to put Jim on the bank account as a followup to electing him Treasurer at the last meeting. Bob will also follow up with the bank to change the address for the monthly bank statements from NRPC to his office.

Hudson's list of responses and comments to the plan goals and objectives will be on the agenda for the next LMRLAC meeting. LMRLAC membership, in Merrimack and Litchfield in particular, will also be on the agenda.

Meeting adjourned 9:00pm.

Next meeting will be held Thursday, January 22, at Margaritas.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Archambault
secretary