

RIVER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, May 9, 2024

3 PM

Town Offices, Nowak Room

Draft Minutes

I. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Richard Huber (Chair), Lionel Ingram, Dan Jones, Rod Bourdon, Terrie Harman, Niko Papakonstantis, Select Board Rep., Trevor Mattera, Conservation Commission Rep., and Warren Biggins, PEA Rep.

Members absent: Carl Wikstrom

Staff present: Town Engineer Paul Vlasich, Kristen Murphy – Conservation & Sustainability Planner, and Town Manager Russ Dean

Chair Huber called the meeting to order at 3 PM.

II. Approval of Minutes

March 21, 2024

Mr. Huber recommended an edit.

Mr. Ingram motioned to approve the March 21, 2024 meeting minutes, as amended. Selectman Papakonstantis seconded the motion. A vote was taken, the motion passed 8-0-0.

III. Kristen Murphy – Alewife Festival

Ms. Murphy reported that the Alewife Festival would take place on Saturday at Founder’s Park from 10 AM to 1 PM. She indicated there are representatives going to be present from five town departments, six different town committees and 15 additional partners. Fish & Game will be there with native fish, there will be information on the secrets of Oysters, information on water bugs and health of the water, and battery-operated lawn equipment to try out courtesy of RJs. She noted the electric Tesla Truck will be there, local photographers and others, plus a lot of Alewife.

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IV. Update on River Related Issues (Paul Vlasich)

Siphon Project

Mr. Vlasich reported after unsuccessful attempts to dislodge the drill head those were abandoned for a different plan this morning which will use a paddle bit to go to the Swasey Parkway Side.

V. VHB Presentation – Updates on Pickpocket Dam Draft Feasibility Study

Mr. Vlasich noted that Jacob San Antonio and Pete Walker from VHB were present. Mr. Vlasich summarized the feasibility study progress to date (which is on the town website) and recapped the March meeting. He discussed funding partners, competing issues and priorities, NH DES Stormwater programs and 100% forgiveness loans. He noted the 400-page report is being reviewed now.

Dan Jones indicated he could not get the maps to open. Mr. Vlasich will get three copies and leave one with the Town Manager and two at the library.

Mr. Vlasich recapped the alternative projects, raising the dam, the auxiliary spillway, and removing the dam and the current cost changes due to the change of the shape of the tiebacks. To raise the bridge \$3.6 million, auxiliary spillway \$3.5 million and dam removal \$1.5 million. He noted the significance of a breach going over the top of the road/bridge onto Route 111, potential work on property, obtaining one parcel, and several mobile homes in need of foundations. He considered those costs substantial.

Mr. Vlasich reviewed sediment sampling results, sediment transport, sediment mitigation, sediment probing, infrastructure, soil stabilization, impact on water supply and quality, cultural resources with and without removal, changes on the fish ladder, wetland systems and recreational changes.

Mr. San Antonio of VHB discussed public comment and responses shown on Appendix H. He discussed permitting, engineering and construction, and funding/construction schedules with and without the grant. With the NOAA grant construction would be completed in 2026 and without another year would be needed to find alternative funding.

76 Mr. San Antonio discussed permitting with NH DES Wetlands under 482-A and US Army
77 Corp of Engineers S 404 of the Clean Water Act, notice to abutters, involvement with the
78 Selectmen, Town Clerk and Land Use Boards in Exeter and Brentwood, the Heritage Bureau
79 for rare species identified, US Fish & Game, and ESERLAC. He described involvement with
80 the Dam Bureau, FEMA and Cultural Resources four step process.

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82 Mr. San Antonio discussed the design process from geotechnical to topographical survey
83 and sediment management plans. He discussed erosion prevention, sediment sampling
84 and engineering design.

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86 Mr. San Antonio described the level of involvement with VHB in the design basis
87 memorandum, bid package and support, contractor qualifications and specifications,
88 proposal review and refinement and bid award process. He described the assistance
89 provided during construction and after. He provided photos showing Great Dam removal,
90 mitigation such as leaving a piece of the dam for historic reasons, and efforts taken by the
91 library to memorialize the Great Dam. He provided photos showing work on Horn Pond in
92 Woburn, MA, and Sawyer Mill Dam in Dover, NH.

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94 Mr. Vlasich asked the Committee if after completion of the feasibility study if their preferred
95 obtain had changed.

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97 Dan Jones asked about re-establishing the town line. Mr. Vlasich indicated that he believed
98 the boundary would be unchanged in the river. Mr. San Antonio recommended speaking
99 with town counsel.

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101 Dan Jones asked about Brentwood's involvement. Mr. Vlasich indicated there would be
102 permitting required in both Brentwood and Exeter. Town Manager Russell Dean indicated
103 that he met with the Town of Brentwood yesterday to discuss the project.

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105 Mr. Vlasich noted with the NOAA grant there would be zero cost to the town for dam
106 removal. A cost escalation was built into the estimate for 2026.

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108 Chair Huber recommended delaying the recommendation of the Advisory Committee until
109 Brentwood had a chance to weigh in. Mr. Vlasich noted that the deadline for the grant is
110 June 1st and the longer it takes to make a decision the less likely to receive the grant.

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112 Chair Huber recommended a roll call vote as to whether each Committee member, based
113 on the feasibility study, recommended to raise the dam, select the auxiliary spillway
114 option, remove the dam, or abstain.

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116 Chair Huber opened the meeting to public comment.

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118 Robert Span of Brentwood read out loud a letter sent by the Brentwood Town Administrator
119 Karen Clement dated March 27, 2024 (copy attached). He urged the Committee to have
120 Brentwood be a part of the decision before accepting the grant. He cited concerns about
121 fairness, and haste. He asked if he would get a sign showing where the river and wildlife
122 used to be on his property.

123
124 Representative Papakonstantis indicated he would abstain. Mr. Jones abstained. Mr.
125 Biggins indicated preference for dam removal, Mr. Bourdon indicated preference for dam
126 removal, Mr. Ingram indicated preference for dam removal, Chair Huber indicated
127 preference for dam removal and Representative Mattera indicated preference for dam
128 removal.

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130 V. Other Business

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132 VI. Public Comment

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134 VII. Adjournment

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136 ***Mr. Ingram motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:34 PM. Selectman Papakonstantis***
137 ***seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.***

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139 Respectfully submitted,

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141 Daniel Hoijer, Recording Secretary

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March 27, 2024

Russell Dean
Town of Exeter
10 Front Street
Exeter, NH 03833

Mr. Dean,

Last fall Brentwood asked what Exeter's intent was and requested a collaborative approach to Brentwood and its residents. You have been sending updates and agenda notices, which we appreciate and would hope to continue.

We have reviewed the final Exeter River Study report by VHB, that was posted on Exeter's website on February 20, 2024. It has become clear that potential damage to properties in Brentwood due to dam removal will be significant. Specifically, we refer to the sections of the report that outline the loss of wetlands, wildlife habitat and corridors, recreation, changes to fifteen (15) conservation easements, as well as private properties along the river up to Haigh Road.

We understand decisions will be announced by July 1, 2024. Representatives from the Brentwood Selectboard, Brentwood Conservation Commission, or any other stakeholders in Brentwood would like to be included in all current and future ongoing discussions prior to any notice from NOAA regarding whether the grant will be approved. If the grant is awarded to Exeter, Brentwood would like to be an integral part of any deliberation process and planning before a decision is made to accept the grant.

We appreciate your efforts in working together to determine the best outcome with the least impact to our environment and residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Clement", is written over a horizontal line.

Karen Clement

Town Administrator