

Pemigewasset River Local Advisory Committee
January 26, 2016 at Pease Public Library
Plymouth, New Hampshire

Minutes

Members Present:

Max Stamp (Bristol); Dan Paradis (Bristol); Dan Stack (Ashland); Leigh Sharps (Ashland); Bill Bolton (Plymouth); Carl Lehner (Holderness); Mike O'Donnell (Holderness); Barry Draper (New Hampton).

Also Present:

Dave Jeffers (LRPC); Gretchen Draper

Call to Order:

Chairman Max Stamp called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Approval of Minutes:

After a brief review of the last meeting by Max, Carl Lehner made a motion seconded by Dan Stack to approve the minutes of November 24, 2015. The motion carried with two abstentions.

Access to Pemi:

Max explained that the NH Public Water Access Advisory Board has requested that we review six Pemi access maps they provided for completeness and accuracy. (These were emailed to members prior to the meeting.) They are also seeking input on whether further access is needed and where, and how to bring this about. Dave Jeffers made available a spreadsheet giving details of the access points shown on the maps. Max asked members to review the information provided and to provide him with a response within a week.

Northern Pass:

Max presented a petition for intervenor status to be filed with the Site Evaluation Committee (SEC) which he had drafted and emailed to the members. Max feels this makes a strong case based on RSA 483:8-a, which sets out the functions of the local river management committees. He said he would like to move ahead with the rest of the agenda at this time unless anyone saw a major problem with the draft petition to intervene. Gretchen Draper pointed out that the deadline for submission is February 5 and noted that there will be a meeting in Concord on March 21 where the SEC's process will be outlined.

At this point, Max expressed increasing concerns about the intervenor process. At the Belknap County review on January 15 the SEC Counsel and the NH Assistant Attorney General recommended having counsel, for which we have no budget. Exploring the possibility of working with the Department of Environmental Services (DES), Max had contacted Darlene Forst of the Shoreland Program earlier in the day and reported on that conversation. Darlene pointed out that DES cannot choose sides, and can only interpret the law. She stressed that the most productive approach would involve coordination and consolidation between groups having similar objectives. She pointed out that the DES Wetlands group probably has the strongest on-the-ground position, and suggested we study the wetlands rules and regulations carefully and contact Bill Thomas of the Wetlands Bureau. She also pointed out that any decision is likely to be appealed.

Some discussion followed regarding the role of the towns. It was suggested we might try polling the selectmen of the corridor towns, but the group showed little enthusiasm for this. Dan Paradis said Bristol has agreed to partner with four other towns to petition for intervenor status, but he did not know which ones they are. Bill Bolton related that Northern Pass representatives had approached the Town Administrator in Plymouth offering deals which would have been end run around the Board of Selectmen.

Max then asked for feedback on the specific arguments we should be making in support of our position. Dan Paradis suggested we give low priority to items such as the need for the power line and concentrate on water quality and viewscape protection. Barry Draper circulated some of the photographs he has taken showing the effects of erosion in the rights of way of the existing power lines. Gretchen Draper suggested that the effects of widening the cleared areas within the rights of way and the effects on wetlands would be important points to make. Barry

pointed out that little respect for wetlands was shown when the underbrush was cut back using heavy equipment. Another suggestion was that we look at town master plans for comments on “protection of viewsapes”, which may be helpful in making the case for considering visual impacts.

Mike O’Donnell then suggested that we “piggyback” with others in making our case and this approach had general support. This led to a discussion of which groups or towns we might partner with. Suggestions discussed included the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF), kayak rental businesses, Trout Unlimited, the Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest, NH Rivers Council, PSU’s Center for the Environment, and the Army Corps of Engineers. Gretchen Draper agreed to contact Will Abbott of SPNHF, Barry Draper will contact Trout Unlimited and Max will speak with Bill Thomas of the Wetlands Bureau.

There was a brief discussion of whether a new vote was needed to approve PRLAC’s petition to intervene and it was decided this is not required.

Adjournment:

Carl Lehner made a motion seconded by Barry Draper to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel A. Paradis
Acting Secretary