

Pemigewasset River Local Advisory Committee
March 29, 2011 at Boyd Hall
Plymouth, New Hampshire

Minutes

Members Present:

Chairman Max Stamp (Bristol); Dan Paradis (Bristol); Mike O'Donnell (Holderness)

Also Present:

Dave Jeffers (LRPC); Carl Lehner (Holderness Planning Board)

Call to Order:

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Approval of Minutes:

Lacking a quorum, the January and February minutes could not be approved.

Report on Water/Watershed Conference:

Dave Jeffers, Max Stamp and Carl Lehner reported on the Water/Watershed Conference held at PSU which they attended last week. Dave attended on Friday and said the introduction given by Sarah Pillsbury of DES provided a good overview of the topic. He liked the link made between land use and water quality, dating all the way back to the passage of the Weeks Act 100 years ago. (The Weeks Act allowed the use of federal funds to acquire forest land for conservation purposes.) Dave attended several sessions on groundwater protection which covered the topic in good detail. He also learned of the effort DES is making to revise the criteria for defining a wetland and reports that they will issue a new manual shortly. Finally, he attended a session on Low Impact Development and learned of some of the research going on at UNH to quantify the benefits of this approach.

Max Stamp and Carl Lehner attended on Saturday and they were impressed with the plenary speaker, who was a professor from the University of Massachusetts. He provided a good deal of information about the water cycle, particularly in regard to the effects of climate change. He said that rising temperatures have produced an increase rainfall but a decrease in snowfall. An increase of only 2 degrees Celcius is predicted to reduce snowpack by 35%, which could have significant economic implications for this area. Max attended a session where the Alstead flood was discussed. Efforts are still going on to restore the stream channel conditions to something more nearly like those existing before the flood. Finally, Max learned of research which indicates that nitrates from septic systems can travel a greater distance from the source than was previously thought. This is of concern because of potentially adverse health effects. While the leaching of phosphorus is often seen as the main problem near lakes, near the seashore nitrates are considered a greater problem. New regulations may have to be created to address this.

Census Data:

Dave Jeffers reported that the results of the 2010 census are just becoming available. He passed out a chart showing the population change for each of the Pemi corridor communities from 1990 to 2000 and from 2000 to 2010. The data show considerable variation from town to town with the northern towns tending to show greater growth than the southern ones in the last ten years. Overall, the growth rate in the Pemi corridor communities was 12%, which is nearly twice the state average.

Legislative Update:

Max told us two bills are of particular interest to our group: SB154-FN which amends the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act and HB 1 which is the proposed state budget. The current version of SB 154 is less objectionable than the original draft. For example, the frontage requirement has been restored to the existing 150 feet and impervious surface restrictions are closer to those in the current law. There are still some objectionable provisions, such as the need for written permission before DES personnel can inspect a site, adjustment of the point system so that only about 50% as much vegetation needs to be retained in the 50 ft. shoreland buffer, and expanding the provision for waivers. On the other hand, the legislation does retain the current fee/funding structure and extends the applicability of the law for five years. Apparently, DES is not raising any serious objections to the current proposal.

HB 1, the budget act, would terminate a number of positions at DES, including the VRAP Coordinator (Jen

Drociak), Rivers Coordinator (Steve Couture), Watershed Planner (Laura Weit), and all of the permanent full-time positions at the Rivers Management and Protection Program (RMPP). The current proposal would decrease the DES budget by 23%, with the possibility of another 10% or 15% cut to come.

Progress on 604b-funded projects:

Dave Jeffers explained that LRPC is still working on two 604b-funded projects. There is one task left on the original project which produced co-occurrence maps of certain subwatersheds of the Pemi. This involves assisting the towns of New Hampton and Bristol with local conservation/preservation goals. Dave has met Bristol and New Hampton Planning boards and will meet with the conservation commissions from both towns. It appears that New Hampton is concerned with wetlands delineation and preservation, while Bristol seems most interested in revising their zoning ordinance to make the protections afforded on the Pemi, Newfound Lake and the Newfound, Fowler and Smith Rivers more uniform.

The second project receiving 604b funding is the Pemi Management Plan update. Dave passed out a copy of the proposal which outlines a number of steps to be accomplished. He also reported that the Governor and Executive Council have signed off on the plan, so funding is assured.

Management Plan Update:

Max began the discussion on this topic by handing out a preliminary list of present and anticipated problems which had previously been e-mailed to PRLAC members. Because of the small attendance, no attempt was made at refining the list, but Max asked members to give some thought to any additions or changes they might wish to propose before the next meeting. In response to a question from Carl Lehner, Max discussed the purpose of the management plan.

Other:

Max said three letters have gone out to legislators regarding the issues discussed earlier. One of these, which was approved by the membership, went out as a statement of PRLAC's position. The other two are letters which Max sent out in his own name. Max has also tried to speak directly with the local Representatives and has had a conversation with two of them. He feels this has been an opportunity to educate them on issues which they typically know little about. Mike O'Donnell suggested we consider inviting lawmakers to a session which would provide them with some of the basics they should be acquainted with.

Adjournment:

Mike O'Donnell made a motion seconded by Carl Lehner and Dan Paradis to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel A. Paradis
Secretary