

Pemigewasset River Local Advisory Committee
April 29, 2014 at Pease Public Library
Plymouth, New Hampshire

Minutes

Members Present:

Max Stamp (Bristol); Dan Paradis (Bristol); Mike O'Donnell (Holderness); Barry Draper (New Hampton); Fred Gunter (Thornton); Dan Stack (Ashland); Carl Lehner (Holderness)

Also Present:

Dave Jeffers (LRPC)

Call to Order:

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

Approval of Minutes:

Dan Stack made a motion seconded by Fred Gunter to approve the minutes of January 28, 2014, February 25, 2014 and March 25, 2014 as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

PRLAC Comments Submitted to DES on Possible Enhancements to RMPP (RSA 483):

Max explained that Jacquie Colburn of DES has been leading an effort to see how the Rivers Management and Protection Program could be improved. Six meetings were held around the state to solicit input and written comments were also sought out. Max had asked PRLAC members to comment on his take on the concerns raised and summarized for us some of the highlights of his final report to DES as follows:

Q. Should mergers of LACs be allowed?

A. Yes, this could be useful and Max sees no particular problem with this.

Q. Should LAC members' terms be extended?

A. No, this could make recruitment even more difficult than it is now.

Q. Is better coordination needed between DES and the LACs?

A. Yes, Max sees the need for better coordination on vision, goals and procedure as high-priority.

Q. Is the town-based structure of the LACs satisfactory?

A. No. A watershed approach is needed.

Q. Is the SWQPA adequate?

A. Although the latest revisions are welcome, the last version of what was then the CSPA offered better protection. The frequent revisions to the act lead to confusion and are undesirable.

Q. Should third-order streams be included for SWQPA protection?

A. The consensus among PRLAC members is "Yes".

Q. Should there be some tracking of the volunteer hours resulting from the RMPP?

A. Yes. Dave Jeffers said it would be easy to gather the data on the sign-in sheet.

Q. Should the law establish a role for LACs regarding qualitative/quantitative monitoring of rivers?

A. The question was discussed but not resolved. Mike O'Donnell thought it might be useful to see how other LAC's responded to this.

Q. Should the DES establish a white-paper commission to study how volunteer programs could be enhanced?

A. Yes, the consensus was that this could produce useful results.

Q. Should the RMPP provide for better coordination with other programs such as dam removal and culvert assessments?

A. Yes, but more resources would be needed.

Water Quality Testing Schedule:

Water quality testing activities are scheduled to begin May 13. Max expects to pick up the equipment and copies of the current protocols on Friday, May 2. The schedule will remain as proposed in a March 28th email. A few members of the northern group have conflicts, but with the help of Barry Draper and Marty Riehs, it should be possible to cover all of the proposed dates.

Friends of the Pemi – Livermore Falls Chapter Update:

Max reported on a meeting of the Livermore Falls Chapter of the Friends of the Pemi which he attended recently. (He was the only PRLAC member in attendance.) He said that their activities are being channeled in three ways: Recreational, Historical and Environmental and they're recruiting members to help with each effort. Max felt that they had accomplished a lot in a relatively short amount of time. DRED will make improvements on both sides of the river including the placement of at least three kiosks. A bridge over the railroad tracks is planned as well as three picnic tables. Dan Stack asked about access points/launch facilities, which led to a brief discussion of the access locations used by the outfitters as well as the more public launch facilities available.

Stormwater Management:

Dan Paradis had been asked to give a short presentation on the role of the Planning Board on stormwater management, particularly through Site Plan Review. He explained that there are five tools which can be used by local planning boards to influence the effects of development. They are the Master Plan, Zoning Regulations, Subdivision Regulations, Site Plan Regulations and Excavation Regulations. A list of the relevant ordinances describing these functions was passed out.

Although the Master Plan needs to provide the vision which justifies all other regulations, Master Plans are generally updated only every six to ten years and do not deal in specifics. The Zoning Ordinance (and amendments to it) is usually proposed by the planning board but requires the approval of the voters. The planning board is not authorized to grant waivers from zoning requirements; this is the purview of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). In contrast, the planning board alone is responsible for Site Plan and Subdivision Regulations and can therefore grant waivers if it sees fit to do so. Site Plan Regulation only apply to commercial and multifamily (>2 units) structures.

Dan handed out a copy of Bristol's zoning and site plan regulations dealing with runoff. He pointed out that there may well be overlap between zoning and site plan regulations and the group discussed some of the advantages and disadvantages of having them in one place or the other. Dave Jeffers cited some of the tables in the PRLAC Management Plan to give the group a sense of what other towns are doing.

Next on the agenda was a discussion of the merits of having a large scale workshop in Plymouth involving all corridor planning boards and conservation commissions as well as DES experts and PRLAC members with the goal of inspiring local action on stormwater management. Dave Jeffers passed out information on similar workshops sponsored by LRPC in March of 2013 and by the Merrimack County Conservation District within the last month. He suggested that these could serve as a model for what PRLAC might do to build up awareness of this issue among the members of the local boards. This led into a wide-ranging discussion of how best to achieve our goal of improving local stormwater management regulations. In addition to the large scale workshop proposal, other ideas included public education efforts and appeals to planning boards to strengthen local regulations. Mike O'Donnell suggested that appealing to conservation commissions would bring into play a group that should be sympathetic to our suggestions and which would have more influence over the planning board than we would in a direct appeal. Carl Lehner thought it would be important to offer several model ordinances rather than a single version. After much discussion, there was general agreement that aiming for site plan regulation changes would have a greater chance of success than trying to get changes in zoning ordinances, but the path to success remained elusive.

Election of Officers:

Max explained that the bylaws call for the annual election of a PRLAC Chairman and Secretary. Max and Dan Paradis have served in those offices for over ten years and would like to pass these responsibilities on to other PRLAC members. Unfortunately no one has expressed a willingness to serve. It was decided that as long as this situation exists, preparation of the minutes would be rotated among the entire PRLAC membership. The situation with regard to the Chairmanship remains unresolved.

Adjournment:

Carl Lehner made a motion seconded by Fred Gunter to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel A. Paradis
Secretary

DRAFT