

Minutes of Souhegan River Local Advisory Committee

Greenville Town Hall and surrounds

July 15, 2023

In attendance were members Cory Ritz (New Ipswich), Cam Lockwood (Temple), Celeste Barr (Milford), George May (Merrimack), Eric Doberstein (Amherst), Marshall Buttrick (Greenville and Host for the evening), Peter Howd (Wilton), and Kleta Dudley (New Ipswich.)

We met at 6:30 P.M. at Town Hall in Greenville for a short walk to view the sets of falls that passes through the former mills of Greenville. One is an affordable housing complex, one a church and one is currently under scrutiny as to whether it is suitable to become a drug rehabilitation center. The falls themselves were spectacular. We began our meeting shortly after 7:00p.m.

Review of May Minutes- Minutes accepted.

Old Business

New Ipswich-Patriot Scaffolding LLC- This is a duplex that was constructed before the necessary permitting was done. We had lots of issues. Apparently New Ipswich's Selectmen have hired a new building inspector who is not knowledgeable about State regulations concerning setbacks required under the Shoreland Protection. This project was nearing completion by the time the permit was applied for. We reviewed the letter from the engineer (Ed Rogers of New Ipswich) who took over the job. It appears from his correspondence he informed the

party of the need to cease work and attain a permit and then he did what he could to comply with regulations. DES had not yet responded to the changes Ed Rogers made to correct the plans. We still have concerns about access to the lot and the drainage as it is a steep slope down to the river at that point (they claim they don't fall within range that needs storm control.) Cory was going to contact Rosemary at DES and find out status of project there, and depending on their response SoRLAC may send a follow up letter echoing DES's response.

Local Updates

Souhegan Watershed Association-Eric has been spending a lot of time on the water. He posted some trips he intended to take and people showed up to join him. Many of them had their own stories of why they liked to get out and enjoy the water. Eric wants to improve and promote a healthier river and recreation. He believes we need to create additional commentary to increase interest as his posting has done. Eric noted that a common thread was that people want to get out on the river but not necessarily alone, they are looking for like-minded individuals and they need to know where the sites to access the river are. He thinks we can do a lot to address these issues.

George responded to two teenagers who had contacted him for monitoring, and he got them going on cataloguing micro invertebrates.

Discussion followed on how to increase the public access. Do we add this to our list of things in our watershed plan that we

would like to see the towns address? We need to do another white board session, “Who Speaks for the River.”

Eric is heading up the Merrimack River Trip which will launch from Moores Crossing August 5.

New Ipswich-see above

Temple-Conservation Commission is talking to 2 people about easements whose property abuts Heald Tract.

Greenville-Concerning the rehabilitation issue. The Planning Board accepted site plan as being complete for consideration. There is a major issue with parking. Plan has changed at every meeting so there have been delays for public comment. The Planning Board seems to be getting frustrated. Marshall commented that every member had a copy of the letter that SoRLAC had sent and the letter was referred to as well. Marshall also noted that public attendance was not what he would of wanted to see but said there were not any single family home abutters, instead a lot of urban renters that may feel their input is not necessarily important. He does suspect the plan will be denied. It has been difficult to determine ownership of property. Apparently, it is someone from a former Yugoslavia region. They have made promises about their intent but haven't followed through on what they say. There are also concerns about the tax base. Should this property claim a tax free status it would not be good for the town. They lost approximately 8% of their tax base with the elderly housing facility.

Wilton-Wilton-DES sent a field inspector down to check out the Fairview Property LLC parking lot site on 31S that had a lot of utility vehicles parked over the fall and winter. The 4 lots border the Souhegan and are in close proximity to Wilton's wellheads for their public water supply. The owner was found to have cleared and graded the lots without an AOT (Alteration of Terrain) permit. An air quality complaint was also previously filed with DES regarding an illegal burn. Wilton also served the owner with a Cease and Desist order. They pleaded ignorance of the statutes and have hired Meridian to handle preparation of a site plan that complies with local and State requirements. A lawyer (Mike Atkins out of Peterborough) who represents the owner reached out to Peter and Bart Hunter. Peter will invite the owner, his lawyer and engineer to the September 21 meeting in Wilton to have a conceptual discussion prior to submitting their permit requests to DES.

Stony Brook, a major tributary of the Souhegan, has had incredibly high E.coli counts (over 1,000 in some locations/times) this summer. Goss Park, a local recreational site with a swimming pond sourced from Stony Brook has had readings over 600 on multiple occasions, leading to the closing of the park for much of the summer. People have gotten ill. To compound the problem, someone dumped an unknown amount of chorine tablets into the water. Police were called and DES was called. George thinks this should be an educational event. Lyndeborough Select Board admitted they have at least one septic problem. This is ongoing in the court system, may be that the owner's can't afford to fix it. George said we should ask for a study. Peter offered SoRLAC's help to both the Wilton and Lyndeborough Select Boards but the lack of response suggests

they want to manage it “in house.” Cory will talk with Tracy to see what we can do to help. DNA testing could be done to determine source.

In Lyndeborough there was a phenomenally high E.coli count (over 1,000) right on the Wilton/Lyndeborough line at a popular swimming hole. People have gotten ill. Town has been proactive to do testing. There has been a lot of flack from residents. To compound the problem, someone dumped a lot of chorine tablets into the water. Police were called and DES was called. George thinks this should be an educational event. Lyndeborough Select Board admitted they have at least one septic problem. This is ongoing in the court system, may be that the owner’s can’t afford to fix it. George said we should ask for a study. Peter offered to help board, they want to fix it “in house” Cory will talk with Tracy to see what we can do. DNA testing could be done to determine source.

Milford-Souhegan River Education Trail behind Souhegan Valley Boys and Girls Club (SVBGC) to the Keyes Field footbridge is nearing completion. Story boards and information kiosks are going up next week. **Celeste** will send a video of Fletcher site cleanup to members (this is a QR code link on one of the storyboards).

On a separate note, **Celeste** had a conversation and site walk with the Facilities Management person of the SV B&G club. The Club has concerns about the safety of their

child members next to the river and want to put up a fence along the trail. She suggested a rail fence on the inside (private property side) not on the river's side.

Amherst-Congratulations to Rob, he was instrumental in protecting 170 Acres in Amherst. It was a deal 6 years in the making. And thanks to the owners.

Merrimack-Nothing to report.

Field Trip to Billy Ward Pond with President of the Billy Ward Pond Association- Sat. Aug. 12- Eric will spearhead this. 9 a.m.-11a.m.

Aug. 5- Merrimack Canoe Trip

RMAT-There was discussion on an evaluation of State owned land. Need to determine if it should be held on to or let go. What is the ecological value of property? DOT and Fish and Game will weigh in. A mapping tool is being put together.

Submitted by Kleta Dudley, Sec. July 24, 2023

Next Meeting Aug 17th 2023 Milford Police Facility. Walk is planned on the River's Edge Trail. Details will follow but will probably meet at 6:30.