

Central NH Regional Planning Commission

28 Commercial Street, Suite #3

Concord, NH, 03301

Tel: (603) 226-6020

Fax: (603) 226-6023

www.cnhrpc.org



Warner River Nomination Committee Meeting

Tuesday, May 3, 2016

Warner Town Hall, 5 East Main St, Warner NH 03278

7:00 P.M.

Minutes:

Attendees	
Chris Connors, Trout Unlimited	George Embley, Town of Webster, Trout Unlimited
Sue Hemingway, Town of Warner	Peter Ladd, Town of Warner
Scott MacLean, Town of Bradford	Nancy Martin, Town of Warner
Ben Nugent, NH Fish & Game	Michael Simon, Town of Warner

Commission Staff: Sam Durfee, Michael Larson

The meeting began at 7:04 P.M, convened by Ms. Martin.

Takeaways from the Public Meetings

Ms. Martin summarized the tone from the public meeting, noting that there is now a short timeline. She asked the committee what their expectations are moving forward and if it is even possible to complete the project within the June 1st deadline of this year. Do we try to finish, or postpone?

Mr. Durfee noted that he has received two letters of support so far, one from riparian land owners in Warner and one from the Contoocook/Contoocook North Branch LAC. He recommended that the draft be sent to DES for comments, but that it may be best if the submission be held off until next year.

Mr. Simon noted that during the information session there seemed to be a general lack of information. He suggested taking time to build up the project and supported sending the draft to DES for comment. That way the feedback from DES can be incorporated into what the committee presents to the public moving forward.

The Project Moving Forward

Mr. Simon asked the committee if the project has become too Warner centric and suggested the group do a better job of communicating with other towns.

Ms. Connors agreed and suggested considering a roadshow approach, presenting the project to other towns along the river.

Mr. MacLean agreed with Mr. Simon, saying that he understands if people don't support the project, but he does not want anyone to say that they did not know about it or did not have access to information. He noted that there were a limited number of people from Bradford at the public meeting and that this probably means the majority did not know about it.

Ms. Connors suggested the idea of creating a social media presence for the project, such as a Facebook, blog, website, etc. She noted that it is free to do this and it would give the project life and make it accessible.

Mr. Embley voiced his support for postponing the project another year. Saying that there is just too much to do. He suggested posting monthly meetings in all towns and on their websites. The representatives for each town could easily do it. He also listed a few issues that he had with the presentations at the public information session that should be fixed for next time.

- Speakers did not adequately relate the specific benefits of nomination to their presentation topics.
- There was not enough balance, both pros and cons need to be addressed.
- Needed more information about what other LACs have done? Are there specific success stories or challenges they have faced? A couple of case studies might be useful here.

Mr. Embley suggested that the committee create a master presentation where everything is addressed and provides a whole picture approach with both pros and cons. This presentation could be practiced and then presented to the Select boards of the given towns. Mr. Embley also noted that it takes 25 or more signatures to put something to a vote at town meeting as a warrant article and 50 or more voter signatures to create a special meeting. He is strongly against a special meeting and suggests mapping a timeline for the project to give communities time to vote on it at town meeting if they so wish.

Ms. Martin discussed current projects that Trout Unlimited and the Forest Society are working on, and suggested that the committee consider trying to work with them in joint outreach. Trout Unlimited's work would provide an inroad to reach new people in the community. She discusses a meeting she had with a researcher names **Colin Lawson**, who is working with culverts, and how the group was able to have able to have the Selectmen out to dinner to talk about flooding and road destruction. If we consider joint outreach our message may be easier to get out?

Mr. Simon also agreed with George in that he wishes that there were more case studies.

Ms. Connors suggested reaching out to Michelle at the Merrimack LAC for info.

Mr. Durfee suggested reaching out to all of the LACs, as well as DES, to get a broad range of stories about what has worked and not worked.

Ms. Martin asked the committee when the last river nomination was? A: 2011. She posited that a lot has changed since then, especially in terms of social media. It is different now that everyone has the opportunity to find information instantly.

Ms. Hemmingway warned the committee to be careful about driving such a hard agenda, and notes that peoples' concerns are legitimate and that they should be understood, not steamrolled.

Mr. Durfee agreed, and suggested trying to find a way to provide outreach to make sure that people can both learn about the project and provide feedback. The public information session was rushed and it showed.

Ms. Connors noted that some people who spoke at the meeting are never going to feel comfortable with the project, and also that there is a great brochure called *What Our Water is Worth* that may help people understand why watersheds should be protected.

Ms. Hemmingway again expressed concern that the committee seems intent on steamrolling people who disagree with the project. She noted that she is still not sure if the nomination is the right thing to do, and given her knowledge of the program, she can only imagine how those who have only just heard about it must feel.

Ms. Connors responded saying that this is why it is important to provide outreach to as many people as possible. She notes the generational indifference about climate change and how people view their river. The State has a role in protecting the river, but sometimes residents don't like the 'State interference' and it is possible that their opinions might not change. She acknowledged that questions were raised and we should provide more information.

Ms. Martin briefly discussed the significance of protecting groundwater, noting cases of groundwater contamination in Rye and Litchfield, NH.

Mr. MacLean agreed with Sue Hemmingway, but noted that at the public information session there were not a lot of specifics about what people were worried about.

Mr. Simon agreed and suggested that this is a process and in the future the committee needs to be a lot more detailed about how people react. There is concern that this is run through a state department, perhaps roadshow presentations would help the cause.

Ms. Connors suggested making an online presentation so people can learn about the project at their own pace and time.

Ms. Martin suggested making the Selectmen presentations open to the public.

Mr. MacLean agreed with the online presentation Ms. Connors proposed, but thinks it should be short and should be a way for people to respond. He also suggested presenting the project in public at events such as 4th of July in Bradford.

The committee agreed that the whole project should be put online, including the nomination document.

Mr. Durfee said he can annotate the maps so that they show what each classification of the river means for that section.

Peter Ladd voiced concern that everyone on the committee is with an organization with a vested interest in passing the river nomination. He noted that it is Mr. Nugent's job, and that both the Conservation Commissions and Trout Unlimited are organizations with agendas. DES has a lot of regulations already and that there is the huge potential for unintended consequences.

Mr. Durfee suggested that having an LAC might provide an easier way to navigate through DES, but the most important thing at the moment is putting the information out there to the public and making it clear that the formation of an LAC is completely unrelated to issues with DES many members of the public had experienced in the past.

Mr. MacLean agreed, and said that he does not want to go before the Selectboard without first knowing how the public feels about the project.

Ms. Martin agreed, and said that moving forward the committee should send the document to DES for review and concentrate on outreach, especially in conjunction with what Trout Unlimited is doing.

Looking Ahead

Mr. Durfee noted the importance of putting information out there.

For the next meeting Ms. Martin suggested that the committee come with an updated timeline about when documents need to be submitted to become a warrant article for town meeting. She also asked that the town representatives find out how to post things to their town websites and if any communication systems, such as newsletters, email chains, etc., exist in their towns, so that it is easier to reach out to residents.

The next meeting will be about setting goals for the committee in terms of outreach.

Next Meeting Date

The next Warner River Nomination Committee meeting was scheduled for May 18th, 2016 at 7:00 P.M., in the Warner Town Hall.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:23 P.M.