

Energy & Natural Resources Advisory Committee

Minutes

July 26, 2023

Present: Joe Levesque, Chair, *Town of Alstead*; Mari Brunner, Vice Chair, *City of Keene*; Matt Kelly (ex-officio), *UNH Cooperative Extension Service*; John Kondos, *Monadnock Energy Circuit Rider*; Richard Mellor, *Town of Rindge*; Marge Shepardson, *Town of Marlborough*; Brett Amy Thelen, *Harris Center for Conservation Education*; Francie Von Mertens, *Town of Peterborough*.

Staff members present: J. B. Mack, *Assistant Director*; Jason Cooper, *Planner*; Rich Clough, *Office Support Specialist*.

Guests: Peter Walker, (presenter) *Principal, Environmental Services at VHB Inc*; David Healey, (presenter) *Chief Scientist at NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES)*; (remote); Marc Laurin, (presenter) *NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT)*; (remote); Stephen Lowe, *NHDOT*.

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Levesque called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m. and introductions were made.

II. Minutes of April 26, 2023

Richard Mellor noted that the minutes should be amended to show that he was present at the April 26 meeting.

Motion: To approve the minutes of April 26, 2023, as amended.

Motion by Richard Mellor, seconded by Marge Shepardson. Approved by unanimous vote.

III. Keene-Swanzey Floodplain Mitigation Project

J. B. Mack introduced Peter Walker of Environmental Services at VHB Inc. to present on the Floodplain Compensatory Storage work currently underway to the south of the intersection of Routes 9, 10 and 12 in Keene. Peter Walker described the scope and purpose of the work and the process that led to the decision to use the site. He noted that the process involved a technical advisory group, and used the services of ecologists, NHDES, and Historic Land Preservationists. He reported that this work was a follow up as part of the four transportation projects in the 1990's that had review of the effects of the construction built into the original plans. He noted that the scope had included the ability to revisit environmental effects and create compensatory storage. He reported on requirements of site selection including:

- The site required 20-acre cubic feet of storage capacity
- Create an initial list of sites
- Create process to select the site
- Refer to the National Environmental Policy Act to study environmental impact
- Prioritized undeveloped land
- Avoid wetlands
- Find appropriate geomorphic conditions

Peter Walker reported that there were initially 10 sites under consideration. Eventually site number 9 matched the most criteria and had the capacity to accommodate storage regarding the water table. It was also a good fit regarding the proposed plantings. Chair Levesque asked how effective the mitigation will be and noted that it might only make a small difference to the overall Ashuelot River Watershed. Francie Von Mertens asked about plant diversity, and Peter Walker responded that diversity and using native plants was a priority. Matt Kelly noted that there are invasives in proximity and likely to make their way in. Brett Amy Thelen asked for a timeframe for monitoring and assisting the new plants. Peter Walker answered that a one-year window was budgeted. Vice Chair Brunner asked if there is a project corridor information page and Peter Walker responded in the affirmative and stated that although the information is sparse, more could be added based on the information that the committee is requesting. Chair Levesque expressed appreciation for the presentation.

IV. Canadian Wildfire Impact on NH

J. B. Mack introduced David Healey, Chief Scientist at NHDES. David Healey explained the use of the air quality index, the categorization of fine particulates and that the National Ambient Air Quality measures 24-hour exposure periods, comparing one year, EPA Air Quality Index (AQI), map present air quality, and future air quality. Color coding air quality on the map is utilized to indicate an air quality action day. Thus far in 2023, NH has had 6 air quality alerts that were wildfire induced and 2 that were ozone induced. David Healey noted that NH smoke preparedness efforts require partnerships with NHDES, NH Department of DHHS, DOS, and HSEM. Proposed actions during air quality action days look different depending on the severity of the alert, but typically include expansive communication efforts, and in extreme campaigns, may involve the American Red Cross.. Vice Chair Brunner asked what mitigation efforts exist for workers who are outside? David Healey replied that taking breaks, getting indoors, and generally reducing exposure are the best solutions. J. B. Mack asked what changes if only part of NH is under an alert? David Healey replied forecasts, and alerts for air quality action days, are issued at the county level. Francie Von Mertens asked if the health effects to a person are different with respect to fine particulate or ozone alerts. David Healey noted that although health impacts are different, in both cases long term exposure can cause lung damage.

V. Update on Watershed Projects

Jason Cooper updated the Committee on the progress of current projects. He stated that work has been delayed with the Spofford Lake implementation project but is still proceeding. He noted that the Swanzey Lake Watershed Management Plan has been hampered by the flooding in the last month, but that interest in the project is high among residents. He reported on a potential project involving Laurel Lake in Fitzwilliam.

VI. Other Items

Matt Kelly reported on the spread of a beech leaf disease. John Kondos reported on interest in electric vehicle (EV) charging by satellite communities. Vice Chair Brunner reported on the Keene Clean Energy Cohort and EV infrastructure and potential fleet conversions. Marge Shepardson reported that Marlborough has joined Community Power.

VII. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for October 25, 2023, at 3:30 p.m.

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Clough
Office Support Specialist