**Nashua River Wild & Scenic River Study Committee**

**Notes from the Study Committee Meeting**

NRWA’s River Resource Center, 592 Main Street, Groton, MA

March 15, 2018

**INFORMAL NOTES**

*Members Present*: Beth Suedmeyer and Robert Pontbriand (Ayer); Rona Balco (Bolton); Jordan Bailey (Brookline); Nadia Madden and Stacey Chilcoat (Groton); Lucy Wallace (Harvard); LeeAnn Wolff (Hollis); Bill Flynn (Lancaster); Paula Terrasi (Pepperell); Heidi Ricci (Shirley)

*NRWA Staff*: Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, Al Futterman, Martha Morgan

*NPS:* Liz Lacy

*Ex Officio:* Anne Gagnon (MA DFW)

The meeting was called to order at 7 PM by the chair, Lucy Wallace.

Administrative & Sharing

The meeting opened with the announcement that the Stewardship Plan, including its recommendation for Wild & Scenic River designation, had been approved the night before by the Brookline Annual Town Meeting. This was followed by the usual round of introductions by Committee members.

The notes of February 18, 2018 were approved as amended.

NPS Update

Liz Lacy reported on the following:

* The next modification to the NPW-NRWA Cooperative Agreement is currently being addressed to assure inclusion in the budget. The amount to be requested is $50,000.
* The Study Report continues to be refined and edited to comply with NPS requirements. Liz hopes to have her draft finished and sent to Jamie Fosburgh by the beginning of April for his review. Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell noted that in her email dialogue with Jamie he had indicated that Liz would be able to share it with Al and Elizabeth in April. Elizabeth also reported that Jamie had said that the most aggressive schedule for completion of the Study Report would have the Washington, DC office (WASO) begin its review of the Report by late May/early June, which would likely take about 30 days. Elizabeth reported that it has been agreed that the NRWA will contract for the Study Report’s graphic design and printing. Given the current timeline, the Study Report could go to the graphic designer with the target of having it ready to print by mid-July. Once the Report has been printed it is subject to a 90-day public comment period. Letters of endorsement should be included in the Study Report; it is optional to include them in the Stewardship Plan. Legislation can be introduced while the 90-day comment period is going on.
* Westfield State University is interested in knowing if the Study Committee and/or NRWA would like to have an intern to work with us over the summer. If there isn’t sufficient Study Committee work to do, the intern could help with other NRWA projects. There was no discussion, nor decision, regarding this offer. The NRWA will consider this matter shortly on behalf of the Study Committee.

NRWA Update

Elizabeth reported that the NRWA has applied for two grants to support the Study Committee’s work: from the Bruce J. Anderson Foundation and from the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts. The Anderson Foundation awarded a grant for our work last year and Elizabeth is optimistic another grant for at least some funds will be awarded. She is less certain about receiving a grant from the Community Foundation, as they are not familiar with the Stewardship Plan.

Stewardship Plan Update

Elizabeth reminded those present that the Committee had approved the text of the Stewardship Plan at its February 15, 2018 meeting with the proviso that typographical and non-substantive corrections could be made by Elizabeth and Lucy. A copy of the Plan was delivered to the Brookline and Hollis, NH Town Halls by March 2nd so the Plan could be reviewed by the public prior to the towns’ mid-March Annual Town Meetings. A copy of the Plan was also made available at the NH Public Forums. The Plan also is now posted on our website. Elizabeth, Lucy and Al Futterman, along with Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold, are selecting photographs, maps, figures, and charts to replace the placeholders in the current Plan, per previous permission of the Study Committee. Last week there was an initial meeting with the graphic designer, Geralyn Miller of GM Design with Elizabeth, Lucy and Wynne. Geralyn will also likely do the design work for the Study Report and will be able to implement the NPS accessibility criteria to both the Study Report (required) and Plan (optional). Lucy added that Geralyn had several good suggestions for making the Plan visually pleasing, such as printing the text in two columns, as opposed to a single block. There also will be many photographs, maps figures, charts and “call out” boxes to break up the text and engage the reader.

Building Support for MA Annual Town Meetings

*Video:* The 5-minute video produced by NorthPoint Productions in collaboration with Elizabeth and Wynne was shown to and well-received by the Committee. It is now on our website and will be made available to the towns’ local access channels. Elizabeth asked that the local representatives let NRWA staff know when they would like to have the video made available for broadcast. The video can also be used at the upcoming town public forums and Annual Town Meetings, if requested. Jordan Bailey noted that it had been shown in Brookline and Hollis and was extremely useful in both “selling” the concept of the Stewardship Plan and designation, as well as allaying fears of loss of local control. Jamie had commented that it set a “good tone” at the outset of the discussion.

*Public Forums:* Lucy referred Committee members to the schedule of Public Forums, noting there were a few open dates and a couple of conflicting ones. Heidi Ricci reported that Shirley’s Public Forum would be held as part to the April 9th Board of Selectmen meeting. She felt, as the meetings are televised and watched, this was the best way to reach the broadest audience. Ayer’s Public Forum is now set for April 5th at the Ayer Town Hall. Paula would like the Pepperell Forum moved to a date earlier than the current one (April 26th). Lucy suggested that the schedule of forums, once finalized, be widely disseminated so if residents cannot attend the forum in their town they can attend one in another town.

Lucy then turned to the draft agenda for the Public Forums which had been prepared by Al. It includes showing the video as introductory to our proposal, a brief explanation of the warrant article, followed by a PowerPoint presentation of the Plan’s highlights. It would conclude with a substantial opportunity for questions and answers. It was noted that some Public Forums might be significantly shorter than the prepared draft agenda, depending on attendance. Al will be editing an existing PowerPoint to tailor it to the upcoming Forums. Lucy suggested that the representatives review the draft PowerPoint when it is ready and let Al know if they would need significant additional changes to the slides. Lucy noted that it is often difficult to get a high turn-out at public informational sessions, but it was valuable to offer them as a way to raise awareness prior to Annual Town Meeting. Jordan noted they had 8 attendees at one forum and fewer at another. That said, questions that were asked were useful in preparing for Annual Town Meeting. Heidi suggested that the PowerPoint focus on the Plan’s recommendations. Al will send the PowerPoint to members electronically. LeeAnn Wolffe noted that Drew Kellner had modified Al’s earlier PowerPoint to customize it to the NH audience and she offered to email it to Committee members.

Elizabeth circulated copies of a 2-sided flyer that had been prepared for the NH towns to distribute at public events and offered to make similar customized flyers for the MA towns. LeeAnn and Jordan agreed that they were very useful to hand out whenever and wherever we were trying to reach out to the public.

*Town Meeting Preparation:* It had been suggested at an earlier meeting that it might be useful for the representatives (or whomever would be presenting the article at Town Meeting) to have a practice session. Lucy asked if members thought they would like to have such a session and all agreed it would be useful. There is also the question of which town meetings Jamie and/or Liz or NRWA staff should attend so as to be available to answer questions. Paula Terrasi requested that Jamie attend the Pepperell Annual Town Meeting as there will likely be questions about the Pepperell Dam.

Elizabeth added that there should be a back-up person designated to step in should the primary presenter become unable to attend town meeting; she would also like a back–up to the back-up. It was agreed that we hold a practice session at 6 PM ahead of our next Study Committee meeting, April 19th. LeeAnn referred members to the FAQ on our website, noting they were very helpful to have at their public outreach sessions and would be useful to have for Annual Town Meeting.

*Earth Day:* The NPS video which was produced for the 50th Anniversary of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act will be shown at the NRWA’s River Resource Center on Sunday, April 22nd (Earth Day). It will also serve as Groton’s public forum on our Stewardship Plan and possible Wild & Scenic Rivers designation. Lucy urged that the event be widely advertised so people from the other towns are encouraged to attend. There was some discussion over optimal time to hold the event: mid-afternoon? Late-afternoon? Should it include a walk down to Petapawag? As there was no clear consensus of time, NRWA will develop a draft program agenda and distribute it to the Committee.

*Endorsements:* Elizabeth circulated a template of a letter of endorsement and asked that Committee members ask town boards ASAP (Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commissions, Planning Boards and, if appropriate, Finance Committees) to send such a letter to NRWA for inclusion in the Study Report. Requesting the letters would also provide the representatives an opportunity to ask those boards to be prepared to speak in favor of the article at Annual Town Meeting. Elizabeth will email the letters to Committee members so they can forward them to their respective town boards. After the Annual Town Meetings, NRWA will reach out to the other stakeholders (land trusts, fishing groups, rod & gun clubs, conservation organizations, etc.) for endorsement letters.

Town Meeting: Protocol and Status of Warrant Articles

Robert Pontbriand has been reaching out to the Town Administrators and Moderators to confirm and clarify aspects of the warrant and presentation at Annual Town Meetings in their towns. His oral report this evening will be followed next week by a matrix of “everything you need to know about ATM”. His key points were:

* He has received written confirmation from all but Townsend and Groton that the language of the article is the same in each MA town. He has been in touch with Townsend and Groton: in the case of the former he has a “soft” yes, but wants it in writing; in the case of the latter the written confirmation will be coming shortly.
* Not surprisingly, each town is different with respect to allowing a written explanation of the article. He will send the explanation provided to Bolton to the Committee members. It was suggested that explanation also be posted on our website.
* The moderators in all of the towns allow a brief explanation. Robert is uncertain how many allow a longer one which might include showing the video, but will get that information to us.
* The protocol for allowing non-residents to speak varies from town to town. Robert suggested that the presenters check with their Moderators and advise them before the start of the meeting if there is a non-resident they may want to call upon to speak or answer questions.
* The language of the article cannot be altered on town meeting floor. Robert will try to get a written statement from counsel that the Moderator could read should it come up. The essence of the response will be that this article has regional applicability and, therefore, cannot be altered by individual town meetings. It also cannot be “Tabled” or “Sent to committee” for consideration at a future town meeting.
* Robert is reaching out to the Town Administrators to ask that they be prepared to support the presenter as well, given that this undertaking began with the towns’ Boards of Selectmen endorsing the request for the Study.
* Robert will prepare a cheat sheet/FAQ for the presenters to have at Annual Town Meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9 PM.

Next meeting: April 19th, 7 – 9 PM at the NRWA’s River Resource Center. From 6 – 7 PM there will be a session to help presenters prepare for their Town Meetings.