

York River Study Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 27, 2018, Grant House, York

Voting Members Present: Chuck Ott, Karen Arsenault, Cindy Donnell, Joan LeBlanc, Mike Masi, Jack Murphy, Judy Spiller

Voting Members Absent: Stefan Claesson, Jean Demetracopoulos, Thom Kearns

Committee Members Present: Paul Dest, Jennifer Hunter, Jim MacCartney

Other Attendees: David Chase, Emma Lord

5:30 meeting called to order by Chuck Ott

1. Minutes of the October meeting were approved.
2. Status updates
 - a. Town votes: Judy reported on Kittery Council's vote on November 26. They passed a resolution supporting designation and the Stewardship Plan with a 7-0 vote. Jenn noted the results of November 6 votes in York and Eliot. Of those that voted on York's Question 2, 63% voted in support and 37% voted against. Of those that voted on Eliot's Question 10, 73% voted in support and 27% voted against. Jeannie is at the South Berwick Council meeting for the first reading of a designation endorsement resolution modeled after the one Judy did for Kittery. It's likely the Council will vote at its December 11 meeting.

Suggestions were made to formally thank all community officials who supported designation, and to craft another letter to the editor following the South Berwick vote to issue thanks and outline next steps.
 - b. Congressional outreach / bill sponsorship: Paul noted he's been in contact with the offices of Congresswoman Pingree and Senator King. They viewed the community votes and margins very positively. They are awaiting results from all four communities. Paul has an upcoming conference call and an in-person meeting with staff from each office. Designation bills have already been drafted for the other two study rivers – Nashua and Wood-Pawcatuck. It would be most advantageous to have the York River designation bill bundled with those, if possible.
 - c. NPS Study Report: National Park Service will issue a report to Congress that identifies the findings regarding eligibility (ORVs, free-flow condition, water quality) and suitability (protections in place and local support for designation based on town votes). Jim anticipates a draft in mid-January for YRSC review, followed by final internal NPS review. The Study Report is then posted on the NPS public information site and has a 90-day public comment period. NPS responds to comments received.

- d. YRW&S Study budget and coordinator: Paul reported a balance of ~\$11,000 in the Cooperative Agreement as of November 1. This could fund the coordinator position through roughly the end of March at 12-15 hours per week.
 - e. Friends of York River: Karen noted the efforts of the friends group was instrumental. Funds raised enabled outreach around the election that YRSC was unable to do. The friends' outreach involved yard signs, stickers on four weeks of the paper, two ads in the paper, and two mailings to a subset of York residents. The friends also helped organize letters to the editor, social media, and voting day displays.
3. Transition planning. Paul had to leave early but noted his ability to continue on during the transition. Chuck provided some suggestions for paving the way for a successful future Stewardship Committee: work on team-building and support a team environment at the outset; reach out to people who were against designation but are willing to enter into a dialogue around some of their concerns and are willing to engage others; and reach out to private property rights advocates. The group discussed many aspects of transition and roles for the current Study Committee. These questions and issues will be further discussed at the next meeting.
- There is not one model for transition in looking at other Partnership W&SRs. It depends on time to get a bill passed, as well as the structure and capacity of the current committee. Many studies were convened using an existing watershed organization's structure, so there is some core capacity in those cases to help during the transition.
 - The committee needs to keep communities connected and informed during the transition.
 - The committee needs to identify the key roles and capacity needed to get through key events (community outreach, NPS Study Report, etc.).
 - There is uncertainty around timing of bill introduction and passage, which makes transition planning and communication more difficult.
 - Is there a role for the Study Committee in implementing the Stewardship Plan or conducting additional studies of the river during this unknown transition time?
 - Is there a need or benefit to establishing a Stewardship Committee before designation?
 - Jim noted it's unlikely additional funds can be added to the current Cooperative Agreement, but he will be available to work with the York River committee for the next year.
 - The Study Committee has an active role (the Study is not complete) until NPS submits its Study Report to Congress, which could be in the June 2019 timeframe.
 - Chuck suggested continuing to meet monthly, at least in early 2019.
4. Next meeting is January 22 (no meeting in December). Topics include continued transition planning and review of draft NPS Study Report.

Meeting adjourned at 7:33.

Submitted by Jennifer Hunter, York River Study Coordinator