

## Meeting Minutes

**Date:** November 8, 2011

**Location:** Nashua River Watershed Association

**Time:** 7:30 PM

**Attendees:**

Commissioners: Mike Roberts, Chris Christie, Lisa Wiesner, Carl Canner, Carl Flowers, Leo Laverdure

Liasons: Mark Archambault

Guest: Terri Ragot, Carol Canner, Sue Lotz, Tucker Smith

**Minutes taken by:** Stephanie Strickland

**Agenda:**

1. Sue Lotz “Gross National Happiness Index” of Bhutan
2. West Groton Hydro
3. Sustainability Plan
4. Adjourn

**Agenda Item #1: Sue Lotz “Gross National Happiness Index” of Bhutan**

**Discussion**

- Sue: My husband and I went to Bhutan for two and a half weeks and I would like to talk to you about what they’re doing. Many people go to Bhutan for the natural beauty and wildlife, but the culture is what intrigued me. Art and religion is a big part of their culture. They are a Buddhist country. There are 700,000 people, the low number probably due to the terrain. They are independent and in 1972 the fourth king coined the term “gross national happiness”. (Gives handout). Bhutan began with four criteria but then switched to nine categories for gross national happiness. The king walked his talk and lived a simple life, and his people loved him. Bhutan decided to have a constitutional monarchy, which began in 2008. They interview a sampling of people every year to see how the “gross national happiness” is working. It seems to be working for them, they radiate a certain happiness. They were cut off from the rest of the world, until about twenty years ago so they don’t have higher education, and they do have some poverty. Bhutan has influenced other places like Seattle, who created Sustainable Seattle.
- Mike: As a run up I asked everyone attending to look at the Seattle website. They have a whole thing on how to construct happiness in your area. (Gives handout). For those of us who have been thinking of indicators do we think this would be useful and using Seattle’s methods?
- Carl C: Well they certainly are important issues and we’ve discussed many of them already.
- Terri: I do think it’s worth pursuing and I can see endless discussions of prioritizing these issues.
- Mark: Yes I’ve heard of this and I’m intrigued. I do think there’s a need for this.

- Mike: Is a sustainable community happy?
- Mark: I would say so.
- Tucker: It's a focused activity, a way to give structure.
- Mike: I don't want to go back on what indicators are, I want to find tools to continue.
- Carl F: It doesn't seem to put much emphasis on economics. We are kicking off the street captain program soon. Elders would call captain and if the captain doesn't hear from them they would call the police. People in Groton don't have a connection to the town. We should look at things like that.
- Mike: Well we talked about neighborhoods back in the second year of the commission. When we lost the inn it took a piece of heart from the town. There are complaints that people aren't very friendly in town.
- Terri: What Carl was saying worked very well in my neighborhood.
- Chris: I think this country is weak to poor on many of these items. Our balance of life depends of these issues, and we are weak in most of them.
- Leo: Some measure of these items is what sustainability is all about. Ultimately happiness and well-being are end results of sustainability. Happiness initiative seems like a good comparative. They've obviously done this before and I would like to look at it more closely.
- Terri: I think it would do the community good to at least introduce these ideas as a way of having people self asses.
- Mike: What I'm getting from this is everyone thinks this is a good idea and so do I. I'm going to see if I can speak with Sustainable Seattle and have the commissioners further research this. How does this relate to the three legged stool? It seems we could go down the list and see how the economy, environment, and society are related. I'm going to try to get a package of materials together on this for our next meeting.
- Carl C: Happiness is an individual state of being.
- Mike: I want to see how the government of Bhutan determines this.

#### **Action Item**

- Begin studying Sustainable Seattle and other communities and come prepared to discuss them next meeting.

#### **Agenda Item #2: West Groton Hydro**

##### **Discussion**

- Carl: Between 1987 and 1990 there was a committee that discussed the hydro, that I found. There was an issue with the dam in West Groton and it would cost 25,000 to fix. It seemed as though the selectmen wanted to know down the dam. Last meeting I proposed the sustainability committee put a letter in the paper and try to save the dam. (Hands out copy of letter). It passed unanimously to appropriate 25,000 dollars. I thought it would be interesting to look at the review the committee wrote in 1990 on the hydro site. Basically there was a committee that requested a feasibility test be done and the conclusion was this would be an excellent proposition for the hydro site. There was a hydro site there for most of the twentieth century. The dam was set up to be a hydro site. The town would have benefited two million dollars in energy. It didn't get a two thirds vote and the issue was dropped though. I think the feasibility of a hydro site in West

Groton is worth looking into. This is perhaps the type of alternative energy we should look into.

- Chris: I went to a finance committee meeting and asked about making a generator but I do think it's worth looking into and updating the numbers. I do think it's worth revisiting and looking at. Maybe Carl and I can set up a meeting and discuss this.
- Mike: I think we need to build in the carbon footprint as well.
- Chris: I definitely think there are risks, but we should look into it.
- Terri: What are the ramifications to fish and wildlife? Why is this only about money?
- Chris: Things like that need to be looked at more closely.
- Mike: What I think needs to be done is a credible feasibility account. To Carl: Can you research some grants and bring the information back?
- Carl: We should go further than that and look at costs.
- Mike: We'll put this item on the agenda for next month as well.

⊖ **Action Item: Carl and Mike research lowhead hydro, technology, costs, feasibility. Also cost of feasibility study.**

### Agenda Item #3: Sustainability Plan

#### Discussion

- Mike: The third item is working on our sustainability plan but my idea is to wait until we decide a model. We are going to be handing out the farmer's handbook to all farmers by the end of the year. We are going to be putting a draft of the history of agriculture in Groton. Are there any other thoughts?
- Lisa: I attended new entry farming which was very entertaining and inspirational and I think it's really going to add to the sustainability culture.
- Leo: Everyone is aware that on October 31, we reached seven billion. The resources per person will continue to go down. Twenty seven percent of the world has access to the internet right now. One idea is to educate and one commissioner could be in charge of a segment where they introduce a new thing. One of our difficulties is getting young people involved. I think we should meet up periodically with other sustainability commissions.
- Adjourn.

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