

SKAGIT RIVER IMPACT PARTNERSHIP – STEERING COMMITTEE

Minutes from May 8, 2007

Present: Mike Anderson, Chal Martin, Jana Hanson, Chuck Bennett, Daryl Hamburg, Bud Norris, Dave Olson, Kevin Rogerson, Kate Moser (SVH), Ric Boge, Larry Kunzler, Bob Hughes, Dan O'Donnell, Scott Thomas and Kerri Grechishkin

Call to order:

Bud Norris called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m. in the Mount Vernon City Hall Conference Room.

1.0 Updates:

1.1 NHC Report: Final Issued

Martin noted that the NHC Final Report is substantive, and not substantially altered from the preliminary report. **Norris** asked if the County was considering asking for further analysis in response to the report. **Boge** responded that possible follow up by the County could include 1) contacting PSE and the Corps to pursue the recommended changes regarding ensuring the availability of flood control storage earlier in the year 2) sending copies of the report to the Corps and FEMA and requesting that they consider the findings and take a look at EMA 3) installing an additional staff gage at the original site of the Concrete gage 4) pursuing the recommendation to seek clarification from the USGS regarding the proposed paleoflood studies.

Martin stressed the need to have added flood storage put in place behind the Baker dams and said it is wrong and poor public policy to pursue the current course of action that ties any future additional flood storage to the unresponsive GI study. As a next step, **Martin** raised the idea of convening a technical conference with local, state and federal representatives focusing on the data points and the technical efforts being used, starting with the 1897 data point. **Norris** supported the idea and advised that a list of prepared questions be drawn up to set the framework for such a conference if it were to take place. He suggested making the conference public and sending a formal invitation to appropriate top officials. He stressed that the goal of the conference should be raising the level of awareness and augmenting the learning process. **Norris** asked whether the County would support such a conference, and **Boge** said that he would ask the appropriate parties.

1.2 Concrete Shoreline Substantial Development Permit for PSE

Rogerson stated that an appeal has been filed by the cities of Mount Vernon and Burlington and Dike Districts 1 and 12 to review Concrete's decision to issue PSE a permit under the Shoreline Management Act without conditioning the permit to provide adequate flood control measures.

It was also mentioned that Concrete erroneously granted the permit under its 2004 version of the Skagit County Shoreline Master Program, rather than reviewing it under the 1977 version as it should have. After a very brief meeting, the Concrete Town Council nevertheless decided that the permit should be granted regardless of which version of the shoreline law is used. In addition, the Council did not consider any of the

written comments the City and Dike District lawyers made regarding the permit application.

1.3 Hamilton Smith House Investigation

Martin showed a picture taken from the exposed exterior wall of the house, which clearly showed a flood mark right at the first floor elevation, as expected. Samples are being analyzed to see how high the river silt went. **Martin** will then compile all the information and put it into a final report.

1.4 Report from Dr. Hromadka

Martin said that Dr. Hromadka expects his preliminary report to be finished by the end of the week. Dr. Hromadka is looking at the issue from a purely statistical point of view.

1.5 Public Meeting Sponsored by Burlington Chamber

There will be a Town Hall Meeting on the FEMA 100-year Flood Plain Map Study in the Burlington Edison High School Cafetorium at 7 p.m. on Thursday, May 24. The meeting will be facilitated by the Burlington Chamber of Commerce. **Norris** encouraged SRIP members to attend if possible.

2.0 Issues:

2.1 How Should the SRIP Follow Up on the NHC Report?

Anderson suggested speaking to Larsen and Cantwell about the group's concerns. **Norris** said that the consistent theme heard from the federal delegation is to wait for the GI study. **Rogerson** added that the federal delegation is cc'd on all correspondence. It was mentioned that John Wiseman, past City Engineer for Mount Vernon, is familiar with what happened in the 1970's with regard to the base flood elevations and the floodway issue, and that he may be available to provide some history or point staff to documents that may be helpful to the appeal effort. **Kunzler** said that the nonresponsiveness of the federal organizations is a major issue and should be brought to the direct attention of our elected officials. **Thomas** said he feels it is more important for them to understand the Baker flood storage situation. The group decided to wait to contact the elected officials until after the May 24 Town Hall meeting, and to encourage the public to write to their senators and representatives at the meeting, as well.

2.2 Presumed FEMA Appeal Process:

Norris brought up the idea of the group hiring outside legal and technical support to aid in the appeal process. **Rogerson** stressed the importance of preparing for the appeal well in advance, as the chances of prevailing are more likely if the case is ready before FEMA's decision is made. The NHC, Corps, PIE, Hromadka, and forensic information all needs to be compiled, synthesized and evaluated, which is a massive task.

The substantial amounts of money that would be involved in hiring outside help was discussed. It was decided that **Rogerson, Shultz, and Thomas** would come up with a ballpark figure for the costs involved. Once that has been established, individuals will be able to approach their respective jurisdictions to discuss participation and cost sharing. **Norris** suggested they appeal to the County again to join the SRIP in this type of effort. The group decided that each separate jurisdiction would write a letter asking the County Commissioners to join the SRIP for this purpose.

Rogerson, Shultz, and Thomas will also work on a common defense agreement that would be signed by everyone involved. In the meantime, **Martin** said he would raise the notion of getting PIE on retainer for Burlington in order to be able to access their services quickly when the time comes.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.