

# SKAGIT RIVER IMPACT PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE Minutes from November 16, 2006

Present: Bud Norris, Charles Bennett, Jana Hanson, Neil Hamburg, Kevin Rogerson, Mike Anderson, John Schultz, Sharon Dillon, Chal Martin, Harry Hosey, Ken Dahlstedt, Jon Aarstad, Ric Boge, Dave Brookings, Dave Olson, Gary Rowe, Esco Bell

## Call to order:

**Mayor Bud Norris** called the meeting to order at 8:00 am.

**1.0 Bud Norris** discussed the relationship between the SRIP and the BOC and indicated his hopes for a renewed relationship after the new year. **Jon Aarstad** discussed the meeting with Mayor Dillon earlier in the week and the importance of having all of the governmental entities work together on the FEMA mapping issue.

**Harry Hosey** talked about the number of activities that the SRIP is engaged in and more specifically, the response that PIE has prepared to the Will Thomas memo and the WSDOT report that is forthcoming. **Harry** also stated the importance of having a consensus within the partnership, if there isn't then we will receive no support from our congressional delegation. **Harry** also stated that it is the cities that have the most to lose and the County should take a neutral position and defer to the cities within the SRIP. **Aarstad** stated that the partnership is strengthened by the County support. Burlington Council member Garner Bensen had reported that Sen. Haugen had indicated that our voice in Olympia will be stronger if it is together.

**Gary Rowe** asked what the SRIP is asking the County to make a decision on. **Norris** indicated that it would be helpful if the County stands behind the PIE hydrology as opposed to supporting the COE and asked for support on the Baker Dam storage. **Hosey** stated that the first action of support needed will be when we present the state legislature with recommended flood control measures. **Harry** explained the WSDOT understanding of the flood issues and their interest in coming up with solutions that will protect state transportation infrastructure. **Neil Hamburg** asked how the work with the DOT fit into the FEMA BFE. **Hosey** explained WSDOT's concerns regarding transportation infrastructure and costs to raise structures such as bridges under proposed FEMA BFE. **Hosey** further discussed the history behind PIE's involvement with the County at a time when the COE actually suggested using PIE to work on the hydrology. Now the agency differs from PIE but the most significant difference is the use of the 4 historic floods. There was general discussion regarding FEMA process and then a discussion on the response to the Carl Cooke Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> letter. **Kevin Rogerson** discussed that at the last SRIP meeting the members agreed to respond to this letter in order to preserve our position in the event of a future challenge to FEMA. **Rogerson** also discussed the letter to the FEMA Insurance Administrator to introduce the SRIP and our concerns over the process and lack of involvement with the preparation of the maps.

**Aarstad** expressed his interest in having the signatures from the County included on letters. **Norris** asked if Comm. Dahlstadt would support the letter and if the BOC would support the

SRIP. **Dahlstedt** stated that Comm. Munks would not support the signing the letter and that Comm. Anderson is out of town. **Dahlstedt** stated that it is important to get a meeting scheduled with Col. McCormick. **Martin** suggested holding off on the meeting until after we had finished the investigation on the Smith House in Hamilton. **Martin** discussed the timing for the investigation and that he has asked USGS for support in this effort however USGS would not provide any support. It was noted that the press would be present at the investigation.

**Norris** asked Comm. Dahlstedt if he feels we have a new opportunity after the first of the year to renew our relationship with the County and work together. **Dahlstedt** stated that as far as the BOC is concerned it is important to work with our Federal Delegation which means working together with the Corps and continue with the GI Study. **Hosey** stated that we can take a position to support the GI study but there is only \$200k in the federal budget for this work, not nearly enough to do the job. The suggestion was to work in parallel on a flood control project that will protect transportation infrastructure and we do not need the GI Study to do this. **Hosey** explained the GI process and the time and money needed to complete the study which does not promise to result in a project. **Bennett** stated that we have been in a GI process for the past 13 years with nothing to show for it. **Hosey** stated that 4 years ago the COE came to the realization that there is too much water in the system to protect against, under their modeling efforts and the COE does not know how to solve this problem. There was general discussion as to whether Congress would support a project outside of the GI process.

**Martin** asked about the GI study and the County's position to go forward with it. **Gary Rowe** stated that it has been adopted in a resolution that the County will continue with the GI process. **Martin** expressed concerns over trying to obtain data from PSE on this last flood event and that we all need to focus in the short term on resolving the issue with the historic flood estimates.. The FEMA issue hinges on the historic flood estimates and we believe this data that is greatly flawed.

**John Schultz** asked if we are setting ourselves up by having NHC conduct the work for the county and whether this would create a conflict between the County and the SRIP. He could envision the results being within 10% of the mark which could be accepted by the County and federal agencies but still will be problematic for the cities and dike districts. **Martin** suggested that the county take it slow with NHC and give us time to investigate the Smith House. **Norris** asked Dahlstadt if this was possible. **Dahlstedt** deferred to Gary who indicated that SRIP is probably ahead of the issue more so than NHC. There was general discussion regarding NHC's involvement with the USGS to review the 1815 flood.

**Kevin Rogerson** stated that the FEMA process is not the COE process and that FEMA has concluded its study. This is not a COE issue, and it's independent from the GI study. It is unlikely that the COE will reverse its position but FEMA might if it can be argued that there is more accurate information for them to consider in their mapping effort.

**Comm. Dahlstedt** indicated that there was concern from the COE when the county brought in PIE because of the Lewis County issues. **Hosey** explained the Lewis County matter. Essentially PI was able to secure \$30million for a project and the county dropped the ball. Lewis County was originally engaged in a GI process and the COE could not solve the problem and recommended bringing PI on board. PI recommended independent action but the County stayed with the COE and as it stands today, the COE cannot get it out of the WRDA process and they have lost their money for a failure to act. **Martin** asked if there was concern from the environmental community. **Hosey** indicated that the environmental community did not have an issue with the proposed project but that the engineer from the COE did as well and Col. Lewis, who also intervened once she took office.

**Hosey** discussed the importance of taking a unified approach with a project when we ask for federal support. The primary focus now should be on the FEMA issue. **Norris** stated that the number one priority should be to resolve the data used to determine the 100 year flood; 2) find a way to successfully protect against it; and 3) protect state and federal transportation infrastructure.

**Norris** discussed meeting with the congressional delegation in 2007 and asked if it is possible that we meet in Seattle vs. DC.

**Norris** discussed developing a strategic plan for flood protection and asked the group what they see as the next steps. **Rogerson** discussed two draft letters, one to the FEMA Insurance Administrator and the other to Carl Cook. There was general discussion regarding the flood flow data and the difference between predam vs. post dam.

**Martin and Norris** discussed the reasons for why the County will not support the SRIP position with respect to the data and FEMA issue. **Dahlstedt** discussed the County's efforts to try to persuade FEMA to support the County position last year in DC but that FEMA refused to acknowledge the work as supportable. **Martin** stated that it is the County's position that the work performed by PIE is the County's hydrology. **Rowe** questioned Chal whether there was an adopted resolution from the BOC stating this position. **Martin** stated that as a professional engineer for the County, he signed a letter stating this position.

**Schultz** asked how the County could go through the process of hiring a consultant, supporting the work performed and then turn their backs on the work. **Rogerson** recalled Carl Cook's position that FEMA will not consider PIE's work but will consider the work from another consultant.

**Hosey** discussed the need to continue to build on the WSDOT relationship and the potential project at Nookachamps. Harry explained the impacts that the Nookachamps project will have on Sedro Woolley. Basically, the Nookachamps flood storage will not increase flood elevations in SW. An EIS on the proposed project will analyze in detail the impacts, whether environmental or flood and consider mitigation. This is the appropriate process to go through to determine whether the project is viable. **Hosey** suggested a workshop on Nookachamps. Also, it is Albert Liou's belief that there is considerably more storage in Nookachamps than what was previously assumed. **Martin** indicated that the COE data underestimates the ability for Nookachamps to store water. With all of the information at their disposal, the COE was still not able to determine the flood flows at Mount Vernon as accurately as PI Engineering

during the most recent flood event. There was discussion regarding the EIS process for Nookachamps as the necessary tool for funding a project and how the County funds (\$2.8mill) could potentially be used to fund the study.

**Norris** stated that the Nookachamps solution should be a preferred approach as opposed to the Avon Bypass. **Martin** stated that Nookachamps only works if we use PIE hydrology. There was discussion regarding the investigation with the Smith House and based on the outcome from that investigation how the group should go forward. **Martin** stated that if the investigation from the Smith House reveals a four foot high watermark then his position on the data will change in line with the COE.

**4.0** There was general discussion regarding working with WSDOT and the potential for funding continued study of the Nookachamps.

**5.0 Hosey** discussed the response to the Thomas memo. There was general discussion regarding the Thomas response letter and the recognition of the Stewart data. An important point was made that never has either the COE or FEMA stated that the PIE work is wrong.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:00 am.