

River Study Group Meeting Minutes
April 22, 2015, 1:00 PM

Note to Readers: These minutes are not intended to comprehensively cover all that transpired during the meeting. Rather they represent an attempt to capture the major topics, action items, and decisions that arose during the meeting.

New Representative from Water Office in State Engineer's Office. The group was introduced to Justin Stearn, a new resident of Saratoga assigned to this office and recently graduated from the University of Wyoming. Justin offered to help liaison with the state office in the course of our deliberations.

Purpose of the Meeting. It was decided, in the unexpected absence of the meeting chairman, to pick up the conversation where we left off at the last meeting and try to arrive at what our next steps, following this meeting, ought to be. It was noted that at the last meeting it was determined there would likely be no dredging of the river through town this spring to address present bank erosion issues, retaining the option of dealing with those issues when money for doing so could be available the following spring. Such action is considered primarily under the purview of the town, with a long-term strategy for river stabilization through town continuing to be the primary emphasis for our group.

Meeting Topics. As follow-up to previous meetings, the following topics were discussed:

1. Results of Planning Efforts to Date. Monies spent so far on planning studies amount to approximately \$113K, resulting in the preparation of a conceptual design plan. Next steps are to be taken by the community to select among design options and develop a plan for turning design concepts into a project plan, including necessary tasks and timing, with full transparency to and participation by the public.
2. Approach to Organizing the Community Effort. It has been generally agreed that there needs to be a core group acting to help coordinate future efforts, something along the lines of the group here meeting. Glen Leavengood of the Saratoga Encampment Riverside Soil Conservation District (SERCD) had arranged for a presentation from the NEPHI group on forming a Water Conservation District, a model already developed for situations such as the one we are facing, however the presenter had just informed Glen that he would be unable to make this meeting. It was decided because of the need for an organization flywheel to keep things moving to reschedule the presenter for our next meeting. Glen gave preliminary information on what it would take to form a Water Conservation District, including identifying the river reach potentially involved petitioning the SERCD, identifying and communicating with all streamside landowners, electing a governing body, etc.).
3. Additional Information Needs Identified from Conceptual Design. Earlier presentations by design engineers had revealed that achieving an efficient gradient for the necessary movement of sediment bed loads through the town during high water is highly dependent upon the depth to utility pipelines and to bedrock in the river channel. Jeff Streeter, Upper North Platte River Project Manager for Trout Unlimited, had volunteered at previous meetings to investigate the possibility of using airborne ground-penetrating radar to make the needed measurements at multiple cross-sections along the river. Joe Parsons of the SERCD reported that the School of Engineering at the University of Wyoming has the expertise, equipment, and personnel to do the job. Joe offered to pursue having someone from the university come and make a presentation to our group.

Engineers also made it clear that accumulated sediments subject to erosion above town should be further investigated to determine what measures can be taken to reduce their contribution to the problem of sediment accumulation in town. In response to a question from the audience, it was preliminarily determined that the river reach of interest likely extends from the Shea Bridge upstream to the irrigation takeout below town.

Much of the meeting involved continuing discussions about where the money, for continued planning, public involvement, and actual river stabilization would be coming from. Suzie Cox provided information to the group about the town council budgeting process, as one possible source, and Sally Patton offered to help Jeff Streeter and others in pursuing other public and private sources.

4. Scheduling for Next Meeting. It being seen as crucial to continued progress, it was decided the next meeting should be scheduled by Mayor Ed Glode, as group chairman, as soon as possible (hopefully within the next month). Glen Leavengood offered to coordinate with the mayor on rescheduling the Watershed Improvement District presentation and Joe Parsons offered to coordinate with the university to include a presentation by the university on determining depth to bedrock in that meeting.