

# **River Hydro Communities: Grand River Webber Group**

4/5/24 | 9:00 AM

Muir Village Hall  
122 Superior Street  
Muir, Michigan

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## **Attendees**

- Ionia Conservation District
  - Sessions Lake Equestrian Group
  - Ionia County
  - Village of Muir
  - Lyons Township
  - Ionia Free Fair
  - Ionia County Economic Alliance
  - Ionia Area Chamber of Commerce
  - Michigan Department of Natural Resources
  - City of Ionia
  - Great Lakes Fishery Commission
  - Village of Lyons
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## **Welcome**

- Welcome from Melissa Eldridge and Jessica Tramontana

Eldridge has been established as convener as she is knowledgeable about the area and has prior experience with dams in Ionia County. She affirms that most attendees already know each other and that everyone has different opinions about the direction of the community.

# Planning for Prosperity in River Hydro Communities

## Grand River Webber Group

### Overview of Engagement

- Consumers Energy presents an overview of the river hydro operations and decisions to be made, as well as previous community engagement efforts.
- Burgett describes the goal of this year's approach: engage invested stakeholders. He reminds the group that these are invited meetings and that if it is believed that a voice is missing, Eldridge should be contacted and she will extend an invite. The purpose is not to exclude but to streamline the process.
- Hydro Strategy across the state:
  - 13 dams across the state are nearing the end of the licensing period. Most concerns fall into two areas of responsibility: Consumers (safety, complying with regulations, cost of operation), Community (environment, community, recreation)
- Community Role:
  - Community members want to understand how dam removal would impact their communities, how adjacent properties would be affected, the underlying motivations and qualifications of potential buyers, and any updates regarding future prosperity groups.
- Asset Purchasing:
  - Consumers is seeking potential buyers. Of the 15 bidders, some are viable with strong financial backgrounds, proof to safely operate, and are based in North America.

### Introductions, Affiliations, and Initial Concerns

- All present introduced themselves. Primary concerns included safety of all residents and businesses, prevention of invasive species spread, flow and flooding, economic impacts, preservation of tax dollars, and sustainable energy in different forms.
- Group is expected to remain constant, have consistent in-person attendance, and respectful conversation.

### Community Asset Mapping

- Engagement activity encourages participation through the lenses of nature, people, and economy.

Results of discussion:

# Planning for Prosperity in River Hydro Communities

## Grand River Webber Group

- Nature:
    - Aesthetics – Social Science
    - Habitat gain or loss – upstream/downstream
      - Flow of river, scenery
    - Wildlife
      - Fisheries
      - Animal health
      - Fish
      - Migratory birds
    - Impoundment is the largest lake in the county
    - Water as a resource
    - Flood control
  - Economy:
    - Tax base
    - Proper investments being made
    - Utility rates
    - Recreation
      - Direct: boaters/kayakers/fishing/swimming
  - People:
    - Landowners
    - Safety concerns/leisure
    - Home values/property values
    - People reluctant/forced to change
    - Safety of the people
    - Riparian rights
    - Backwater culture/history
- Burgett describes the options available to the group as relicensing or decommissioning Webber Dam. Consumers Energy wants to avoid divestment to a real estate developer. Priority for divestment is to continue hydro operations while reducing financial burden on Consumers Energy Customers.

## What's Next

- Future meetings will be held in June, September, and October to allow flexibility as stakeholders need.