

TOWN OF ACTON

53 River Street Master Planning Committee Minutes

Date: September 5, 2018

Time: 7:00pm – 9:00 pm

Place: Acton Recreation, 50 Audubon Drive

Attendance: Michele Holland, Louis York, Bettina Abe, Bob Whittlesey, Camille Duquet, John Cook, Peter Berry, Peter Hocknell, William Alesbury, Selby, along with several citizens.

MEETING AGENDA ITEMS:

Cami has moved out of town, so is resigning her position. This results in an open seat.

- 1) Citizens' Concerns, none were mentioned.
- 2) Approve Minutes of August 15 unanimously approved.
- 3) Video: Taking a Second Look: Communities and Dam Removal (20 minutes)
- 4) Presentation: Tom Christopher, on his experience with five dam removals around New England

Comments about the video from the presenter: It is always less expensive to take out a dam than to maintain it, as was with the Bartlett Dam (100') Lancaster MA. Care should be taken with the choice of the engineering company that is selected for removal. The Bartlett Dam was derelict at the time it was removed. 5.5 miles of cold water fishery was restored. The reason for the initial notice for removal was to protect the bridge on RT 117. Vegetation and wildlife were restored within a month after the dam was removed. It was suggested that we not get the RR involved if possible. The removal was done in stages to graduate the flow of silt. This removal was done in 2014, and is continuing to evolve. When you take a dam out, there is almost always a historical significance to the dam. A piece of the generator, the turbine, was put on display to provide a historical reference. The phase 2 of this project describes a boardwalk the length of the river, involves 5 stream crossings of the Wickipicket Brook. The proposed boardwalk would cost would be \$1.2 million. Lancaster's conservation commission then recommended 2 crossings. The overall size of this site is about 20 acres. \$175,000 was the dam removal. \$75,000 for first phase. A plan for invasive plant control needs to be considered. Community support is important. What is the effect of taking the whole dam down compared to just breaching dam? With the breach debris can collect in front. It is important to tell the story, and memorialize the history, but not to maintain a dysfunctional dam.

Fort Pond Brook runs along houses that have septic systems, and sump pumps running every day, and are closer to the river than the Bartlett Dam and these citizens are concerned. The outfall is the Assebet River, so taking out the dam would not increase the river's flow except on a seasonal basis. It was stated that along River St. there has been rising levels up to 6' high during heavy precipitation. Tom

reminds us he is not an engineer. He states that he has not seen a dam removal that has caused an increase of flooding downstream. It would be best to consult an engineer with this question. Tom will get us the cost of phase one and maintenance (\$175,000 for the dam removal; \$3,500 annually for landscaping and snow removal).

5) Discussion: Office of Dam Safety/GZA Report. Selby stated that the report classifies the dam as a level 2 hazardous dam. Bettina passed out the determination report. The town manager should look at liability should there be a major destructive flood event, since the town owns it now. The report is uploaded to DocuShare. Do we have any obligation to notify the Town of Concord if we remove the dam? The Division of Ecological Restoration will give guidance on the process. We have asked for the H&H study. We asked Tighe & Bond, to compare to Laura Blake's quote. Also William Mullin was requested to provide a quote.

6) Discussion: Letter from ACH dated 8-15-18. The public survey showed that a park is preferred, not housing. The tenor of the letter suggests the Conway proposal was binding, and the survey was only 50 people. We can take the Historical Commission letter under advisement, but drawing conclusions is premature. Peter is concerned that they believe there are forgone conclusions, which is not the case. It will be tabled until we can discuss this letter when Bill K is present.

8) Next Meeting Date: September 19th, 7pm Acton Rec Dept.

Meeting was adjourned at 9pm.

Respectfully submitted by Michele Holland