



## WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2019

7:00 PM

Conference Room, Acton Water District HQ  
693 Massachusetts Ave., Acton, MA 01720

**Present:** Robert Sekuler, Barry Rosen, Ron Beck, Lucy Kirshner, Joan Gardner (Board of Selectmen Liaison)

**Absent:** Matthew Mostoller

**Chairperson:** Ron Beck

**Clerk:** Barry Rosen

### 1. Opening

Chairperson Beck opened the meeting 7:05 PM. A quorum was present.

### 2. Regular Business

- A. Citizen's Comments: There were no citizen's comments during this meeting. Mr. Beck used the time to welcome Mr. Santiago Rivero, an Acton-Boxborough High School student, and to provide some context of the work in which the committee is currently engaged.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – The meeting minutes of January 10, 2019 from the Water Resources Advisory Committee meeting were reviewed. On a motion by Ms. Kirshner, seconded by Mr. Sekuler, the minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.
- C. Current Membership Issues & Recruitment: Mr. Rosen brought the committee up-to-date on some outstanding issues relating to the membership of the WRAC.
  - a. An email from Mr. Frost (Town IT) was discussed explaining that Mr. Kreuze could not be removed from the WRAC membership listed on the web site because it seems that he was again sworn-in as a member of the committee. Ms. Gardner took the email and said that she would investigate. All were under the impression that the BOS had removed this former member so that Ms. Kirshner was able to move from associate to full member of the committee.
  - b. In an email from Ms. Kastens, who had volunteered to assist the WRAC in recruiting additional members, she explained that she had contacted Liz Dorsey at the Children's Discovery Museum inquiring as to whether she would be interested in joining the WRAC. Ms. Dorsey thanked us for thinking of her but she is too busy to take anything else on at this time.
  - c. It was also mentioned by that Denis LeBlanc could be a possible candidate. This needs to be followed up.



- d. Mr. Sekuler reported his contact with Matt Lieber who feels that he cannot join the WRAC.
- e. Mr. Beck should be preparing to do a 2-3 minutes “WRAC commercial” on Acton TV. Greg Hutchins ([vcc@acton-ma.gov](mailto:vcc@acton-ma.gov)) sent an email explaining the procedure. He can be contacted for more information.
- f. Mr. Beck mentioned to the group that we should be prepared in the future to choose a new clerk for the WRAC as he anticipates that Mr. Rosen will need to resign from that position because of a new responsibility at the Acton Water District. He also stated that he would be able to take over the job of creating and submitting the agendas.

D. Chapter X Changes Scheduled for April 1, 2019 Town Meeting:

- a. Paul Campbell returned to the WRAC to present us with changes that he has made to the documents (drafts) since he met with us in January. There was a great deal of discussion particularly on how some people might interpret some areas. Mr. Campbell will consider our suggestions. *[Clerk’s Note: Mr. Campbell did follow-up shortly after the meeting and sent the WRAC revised drafts. A copy of the revised documents from Mr. Campbell can be viewed on the Town of Acton web site: <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-10823> ]*
- b. Mr. Beck moves that the WRAC should support both of the Engineering Department’s warrant articles to be presented at the April 1, 2019 Acton Town Meeting. Mr. Sekuler seconds the motion. The resolution is passed by vote of 4-0 (unanimous).

E. Continue Discussion of Actionable Items from Water Workshop:

- a. Ms. Erika Amir-Lin (AWD Commissioner) presented a revised document (attached to these minutes) from the Acton Water District. Ms. Amir-Lin stated that they agree with the original proposed document (see 12/12/2018 minutes) but felt that there was redundancy. They tried to consolidate and distill it down. We combined 8 high level questions into 4. Mr. Beck asked about where were the future needs? Ms. Amir-Lin felt that they would fall out of the other categories.
- b. Mr. Beck said that he believes that we need a list go propose to the Board of Selectmen.
- c. Mr. Sekuler felt that, “The ball is now in our court.” We need a set of “doable” items to present to the Board of Selectmen where we can make a good case.
- d. Ms. Kirshner stated that town staff needs to be a part of the water demand forecast. It is likely that if they are directly involved, there will be more agreement. Using the “matrix” presentation was a good idea. [The rest of the committee agreed with that idea.] Things stood out that way.
- e. Mr. Rosen believes that education (at least a big chunk of it) needs to be directly connected to enforcement. As enforcement was such a big piece of what we



heard during the Saturday Seminar, there has to be a focus on it. Before we do enforcement, people need to understand what needs to be enforced and why. Mr. Rosen believes that the majority of people, once they understand a need for a rule will do the right thing and will follow it. This makes enforcement a much easier task.

- f. Mr. Beck proposed a 3-pronged approach:
  - i. Education (which could be done now)
  - ii. Building the matrix (which could be done now)
  - iii. Supply, demand & rich data (what do you do next?)
- g. Questions left on the table
  - i. How do we create clarity? This needs design work.
  - ii. Many people felt that we need to understand current and future supply data.
  - iii. Many felt that we need to understand future demand better.
- h. Ms. Terra Friedrichs offered the opinion that we should consider getting everything into one place, like a war room, and then see what is missing.
- i. Ms. Gardner told the group that maps and pictures are a great way for people to understand.
- j. *Action Item: Mr. Beck will take the information from the two documents and the discussions from this meeting and create another document which the WRAC will deliberate at its next meeting.*

### **3. New/Special Business**

- A. Date/Time of Next Meeting: The next meeting of the WRAC will be on *Thursday (note change of day & time)*, March 14, 2019 beginning at 7:30 PM in the conference room of the Acton Water District HQ, 693 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA 01720.

### **4. Adjournment**

On a motion to adjourn the meeting made by Mr. Rosen and seconded by Mr. Sekuler, the meeting was adjourned by a unanimous vote at 9:25 PM.



## Acton Water Study Scope Areas Suggested by outcomes of September Water Seminar

### SUMMARY

WRAC has spent the past 75 days analyzing and turning the Water Workshop outcome into actionable focus areas for the proposed Acton Water Workshop.

WRAC wanted to answer the following questions for Acton BOS:

- (1) Is there a real need, both in scope and timing (do we need it, do we need it now) for conducting an Acton long range water study?
- (2) What do the workshop breakout “report-outs” inform us as to the scope of a study that will add real value in answering the most important long-term planning uncertainties and policy decision making needs?
- (3) Which information and analysis needs should be referred to other committees or boards and which ones should be the focus on a WRAC-led water study?

### COMMITTEE APPROACH

The methodology we employed was to (a) enumerate all of the questions that were reported out of the water workshop breakout groups; (b) divide the questions into several main types and assign pairs of committee members to discuss and synthesize each set of questions; (c) turn the questions into actionable recommendations for further study; (d) discuss as a committee what we would like to recommend to the BOS as next steps.

It was the consensus of the committee, that the high level water workshop finding is that there ARE important questions that policy makers seek answers to in making decisions impacting town water resources. We strongly recommend to the Board of Selectmen that a concerted effort to address these needs be conducted. This could be through policy review, studies, working groups, and the use of consultants. In addition to WRAC, other stakeholders need to be included in this process including Town committees/staff, the Acton Water District, and local/regional organizations.

### HIGH LEVEL QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED BY THE WATER STUDY:

1. **OUR WATER FUTURE:** What is the availability, need, and growth in demand, alternatives, risks and costs for potable water going forward?
2. **WATER RESOURCE IMPACTS:** How do activities in Acton and surrounding Towns impact our water resources including management decisions, development patterns, climate impacts, and source protection tools?
3. **ENFORCEMENT:** How can the Town improve the governance structure to make enforcement of town Bylaws and Regulations more effective, proactive, and achieve the intent of that rule making? Is the public aware of the need for strong and consistent enforcement action to benefit the greater good and reduce risks and costs?
4. **PUBLIC EDUCATION and COMMUNICATION:** What is the best strategy for achieving effective, ongoing public education so that the public become informed participants in the decision process? How can communications between stakeholders be more effective and streamlined?



## **FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION ITEMS FROM ACTON WATER RESOURCES WORKSHOP**

What follows directly tie back to the questions that arose from the September Water Workshop. (The specific question for each recommendation is not listed in this summary document, but are available as backup.) It should be noted that some of these questions may be readily answered or have answers that may seem obvious, but not all participants raising the questions were paired with participants that were suited to answer such questions.

### **1. POLICY DECISION FRAMEWORK**

A wide range of policy-related questions from the workshop suggests the need to focus the study on development of a decision-making/consequences matrix. The decision matrix would provide a framework for town staff, policy making entities, (BOS, FinCom, AWD, ConCom, BOH as examples) and other stakeholders (such as Green Acton) to understand and assess implications of proposed projects and activities on water resources and constraints.

The rows would include activity types such as housing projects, commercial projects, 40B projects, overlain by water protection zones and various risk factors. The columns would include impact types such as supply quantity impacts, contaminant risk impacts, recharge impacts, surface water impacts, waste water and solid/hazardous waste treatment and disposal impacts. The matrix would contain, for each box, a key list of most likely impacts that need evaluation, tools and resources to evaluate, and which groups or persons are best qualified to provide needed analysis.

### **2. PUBLIC EDUCATION**

All people living and businesses operating in Acton have an impact on both the Town's water supply and water quality and therefore have a responsibility for their behavior. Decisions made by our Town's government related to building and development also impact our water resources both immediately and in the future. Consequently constituents need a broad understanding of our current water resource management practices. While only four of the questions collected at the workshop specifically mentioned public knowledge and education, almost all of the questions suggested a need for more public understanding.

Key Education Questions:

- Who should set the agenda for Public Education?
- Who should shoulder the cost of Public Education?
- Who should carry out the agenda?
- How should public education be delivered?

### **3. DATA DRIVEN DECISION MAKING**

Future supply, protection and waste treatment needs are all dependent on projections of future population growth, land use decisions, and economic factors. The Workshop raised many questions about what project impacts are in terms of water resource impacts and how to determine those impacts in a consistent and repeatable way. This would help to resolve growth scenarios into a range of likely out-



comes. Reviewing the enforcement of existing rules, regulations, bylaws and permit conditions could help to better understand impacts in light of the questions raised during this process.

Areas related to science and data came up regularly throughout the discussions during the water workshop. This overlaps with the areas of policy, forecasting, permitting, education, and enforcement. Specific data that was discussed or questioned for the decision making process may largely exist, however its availability or current use in existing decision making processes may not be well understood. Organizing and understanding what data is available and how it may be used is a first step. Areas of perceived, real, or possibly out of date data gaps, may benefit from site/situation specific data generation and review versus broader initiatives that rely heavily on assumptions. Another data issue had a common theme related to GIS and analyzing land use, zoning, wastewater management, storm water management, and groundwater protection. Finally, some of the science issues relate to contaminants, regulations, treatment of water resources, and understanding the relationships of managing water resources and land use throughout the community and neighboring Towns. Developing a matrix of interests, concerns, and responsibilities across various stakeholders could drive better use and generation of data, scientific knowledge, and engineering principles.

#### **4. WATER RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS**

Another key set of workshop questions exposed considerable differences in ways of thinking about future water resource constraints (or lack thereof). An important element of actions taken in response to these recommendations (including any potential water study) should be a way for policy makers to understand future supply, factors that could impinge on future supply, and how to understand the costs and benefits of safeguarding future supply. This should include regulatory considerations, environmental constraints, pollutant risks, and infrastructure needs. It should also evaluate constraints and opportunities related to wastewater management needs. Finally surface water and storm water constraints should be identified as they relate to pollutant loading, capacity for the system to handle (natural or manmade), and the pros and cons of recharge. Risk-minimization actions or policies should be identified and developed.

#### **5. PUBLIC REPORTING**

Many of the water workshop questions lead to the need for the developing a framework for regular town wide reporting, both to policymakers and the public, as to the trends and key performance indicators of how the town is doing relative to water quality, quantity, and protection. Associated information as to the changes imposed by each major policy decision made should also be provided.