

Minutes from February 24, 2011 WRAC Meeting

Attending: Ron Beck, Jeff Clymer, Barry Rosen, Matt Mosteller, Helen Probst, and Janet Adachi

Ron Beck opened the meeting at 6:52 PM.

Agenda item 1 – Discussion of Pervious/Impervious Considerations in the Stormwater Bylaw

The discussion of impervious surfaces began with Ron citing statistics on the impact of impervious surfaces. There is a direct impact on phosphorus content and water quality. After the review of some additional statistics, the discussion shifted to the practicality of using the level of impervious surface as one barometer for the application of the stormwater bylaw. The concept being that if very little impervious surface is created by the project it may not be subject to the bylaw (there are likely to be other criteria as well but the focus was what comes under the impervious criteria).

To apply an impervious surface barometer it is important to define impervious surface. Packed soil could be considered pervious or impervious. Engineers for developers will take a very liberal view (erring on the side of designating surfaces as pervious) but this view will not necessarily be shared in monitoring levels of impervious surfaces.

Acton is currently evaluated as having 13.8% impervious surface. Although certain limitations of this calculation were discussed, the view is that on aggregate it is a good but not perfect measure. USGS has stated that impervious cover (not water use) is the single most significant contributing factor to stream flow impact. So this measure is important for Acton and one that needs attention.

The discussion turned to how impervious surfaces could be addressed in the application of the stormwater bylaw. For residential properties, lot size would be important. Commercial properties would be a bigger concern due to size and expected levels of impervious surfaces. We will need to develop different standards for lots in different zoning areas (villages, larger single family residential and multi-family). In structuring the standards, we may want to offer credits for features that counteract impervious surfaces and/or phase-in impacts.

Another approach to address the level of impervious surface is to impose a fee on impervious surface (needs to be a fee not a tax). The intent would be to have a fair system to improve storm water. The approach used in Reading MA was discussed with no fee for undeveloped land and single of two family lots paid \$40. There are enforcement and collection issues: tax bill cannot include fees so cannot assess with tax bills. These discussions included establishing a stormwater utility that collects fees and uses revenue to address stormwater quality.

To better understand how impervious surface percentages vary within Acton we need to isolate these percentages by smaller area. Since subdivisions need to come to Planning Board the stormwater bylaw can be easily imposed and should apply to all subdivision plans. There was discussion as to having these rules automatically apply in Zone 1 or 2 districts.

There were three “homework” follow-ups:

- 1) Understand today’s base-line in more detail
 - a. GIS detail (assigned to Matt and Justin)
 - b. Conservation Commission (assigned to Janet)
 - c. Literature (assigned to Ron)
- 2) Discuss with Roland the different zoning categories and size requirements (assigned to Jeff)
- 3) Subdivisions (assigned to Jeff)

Agenda Item 2 – Acton 2020 Committee

There was brief discussion regarding the comments made by WRAC in the Natural Resources and Facilities and Services sections of the Comprehensive Plan. None of these comments seem to have been incorporated into the sections.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:48