



WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
October 12, 2023
7:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

Present: Barry Rosen, Ron Parenti, Mike Geis, Joe Robb, and Matt Mostoller

Chairperson: Joe Robb

Clerk: Ron Parenti

Others in Attendance: Alissa Nicol (Select Board Liaison), Mike Gendron (Conservation Manager), Kim Kastens, Terra Friedrichs, and David Boccuti

1. Opening

WRAC chair Joe Robb opened the meeting at 7:10 PM.

2. Regular Business

- A. Public Remarks/Comments -- Kim Kastens discussed the results of a recent a water conductivity survey of the Nashoba Brook watershed performed by Green Acton and OARS. Those tests, which covered the Westford and Acton portions of the watershed, had been postponed due to high water levels encountered earlier this year. Numbers in the range of 500 $\mu\text{s}/\text{cm}$ were measured, and she noted that measurements taken in the 1970s were in the range of 100-200 $\mu\text{s}/\text{cm}$. Joe Robb suggested that it would be useful to determine if there is a correlation between road salt usage and conductivity levels.
- B. Review Minutes –A motion to approve the minutes for 14 September was made by Matt Mostoller and seconded by Barry Rosen. Joe Robb suggested a change to the minutes to include comments made by Matt Mostoller regarding the possibility of WRAC becoming involved in an effort to discourage reverse osmosis filter installations. The suggested wording change was unanimously approved, and the revised minutes were then approved unanimously by roll call vote.
- C. WRAC Input to the Open Space and Recreation Plan Update – Mike Gendron contacted WRAC prior to the meeting to request the Committee’s input on the update of the Town’s Open Space and Recreation plan. He initiated the discussion on this topic by reviewing recent outreach efforts, which have included forums, a town-wide survey, and a goals and objectives workshop. Another public forum is planned for this winter. One high-level goal that relates to WRAC’s mission is entitled “Protect critical environmental resources including ground and surface water, wildlife, diverse habitats and ecosystems”, which includes the objective “Preserve and protect Acton’s water supplies”. An example action item is the acquisition of properties that would help to protect the Town’s water supply. Gendron then asked for the Committee’s recommendations on these goals and objectives, and in response Joe Robb showed a set of charts that incorporated information from the Town’s GIS website to identify parcels in sensitive areas that could be rezoned



or purchased. Robb suggested that the methodology used to create his charts could be expanded to perform a town-wide review of properties that lie in Zone 1 and Zone 2 areas. Barry Rosen indicated his concern about the current zoning regulations for Technology Districts, which appear to allow for very high-density usage. Rosen noted that when these districts were established the Town envisioned businesses that would have a relatively low water demand, which may not be a realistic assumption. He suggested that the Open Space Committee speak to the Planning Department about the possibility of revising the regulations for these districts. Terra Friedrichs commented that the protection of private wells should be included in the revised plan. Matt Mostoller noted that changes have been made to the groundwater protection boundaries in the past few years, and recommended that the updated plan include protective actions that should be taken as a result of these zoning revisions. Mostoller also recommended partnering with neighboring towns to mitigate the cost of land purchases for water protection. With regard to future land purchases, Alissa Nicol suggested the formation of a working group prior to the next public forum to prioritize future land acquisitions. That group would include members from the Community Preservation Committee, the Open Space Committee, and the Acton Water District. Mike Gendron supported Nicol's recommendation and noted that while the Town has been using a data-driven model to prioritize properties, the model may not properly capture subjective information that is known to long-time Town residents and current committee members. (The link to the prioritization model is included in the chat section of these minutes.)

- D. Update on Zoning Report – Barry Rosen reported that he and Joe Robb are scheduled to speak to the Select Board on 16 October to present a summary of WRAC's zoning report and request funding for mailing the report to Town residents and businesses. Rosen estimates that the total cost for printing and mailing will be less than \$5,000, and noted that a portion of this cost will be paid by the Acton Water District.
- E. Review of Sewer Commissioners Workshop Presentations –Ron Parenti reviewed the presentations made at the Sewer Workshop, which he and Mike Geis attended on 27 September. Jack Troidl from Woodard & Curran presented an update on Acton's Wastewater Treatment Plant in which he discussed wastewater flow, present and future plant capacities, and recent PFAS6 measurements. Troidl noted that while it is possible to substantially improve the plant's treatment capacity, increasing the allowable effluent discharge would be more difficult. Several influent and effluent PFAS measurements made over the past year were also shown in his presentation; in most cases the two numbers were similar and were typically in the range of 30ppt to 60ppt. Troidl also showed slides of PFAS measurements made by the MassDEP in regional rivers and streams, most of which were in the range of 20ppt to 40ppt. These data show no evidence of a local point source of these chemicals. Regarding the PFAS data, David Boccuti asked if W. R. Grace might be held responsible for some of the current treatment costs; Matt Mostoller responded that at this time there is no evidence that the Grace site is a source of these contaminants.

Kevin Olson from Wright-Pierce discussed the wastewater treatment portion of the Great Road study at the Sewer Workshop, and promised to present the potable water portion of



the study to WRAC at a later time. Olson's presentation included estimates of the cost to provide sewer service to the Great Road corridor, which ranged from \$80m to \$110m for the four engineering options considered. Betterment fees to support a project of this size are likely to be in excess of \$110,000 per betterment unit. Ron Parenti stated that he would contact Wright-Pierce prior to the next WRAC meeting to schedule a discussion of the Add Alternate section of the Great Road study.

- F. WRAC Involvement in MWRA Connection Discussion – This item was placed on the agenda as a result of a suggestion by Kim Kastens, who has recommended that WRAC become involved in the ongoing discussions about a connection to MWRA. Kastens noted that she has recently had discussions with the League of Women Voters about topics for an educational forum, and suggested the question of an MWRA connection as a discussion topic. Since this is such an important decision for the Water District and the Town, Kastens would like to encourage a larger group of stakeholders to become involved in this discussion. Joe Robb reminded the Committee members that since WRAC is a Town board, it would be appropriate to ask the Select Board if they would like WRAC to devote time to this complex question. Matt Mostoller and Barry Rosen both supported the role of WRAC in educating the public about the connection issue, but cautioned that much is still unknown about the list of towns that will choose to connect the MWRA, the route that will be used to create a new distribution tunnel, the project schedule, and project cost. They advised that WRAC should delay involvement until the specifications for the MWRA project have been more clearly defined.
- G. Any Other New Business – None.

3. **Adjournment**

Committee members agreed to hold the next meeting on 2 November 2023 at 7pm. A motion to adjourn was made by Barry Rosen and seconded by Joe Robb. Adjournment was approved at 9:10 pm by a unanimous roll call vote.

Meeting Chat File

- 19:03:24 From Kim Kastens To All Panelists:
<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-17315>
- 19:58:56 From Alissa Nicol To All Panelists:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/013f5a349e984d63a872549a4e427467>
- 20:23:01 From Barry Rosen To All Panelists:
I will return in a minute or so.
- 20:44:48 From Kim Kastens To All Panelists:
25 to 30 years (without simultaneous construction, could be 35-40 years)
- 20:45:07 From Kim Kastens To All Panelists:
according to Table 7.2 in the report
- 20:45:35 From Kim Kastens To All Panelists:
for project 1a/1b which is the conceptual project that includes Acton