

RIVER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, March 21, 2024

3 PM

Town Offices, Nowak Room

Draft Minutes

I. Call Meeting to Order

Members present: Richard Huber (Chair), Lionel Ingram, Dan Jones, Rod Bourdon, Niko Papakonstantis, Select Board Rep., Trevor Mattera, Conservation Commission Rep., and Warren Biggins, PEA Rep.

Members absent: Terrie Harman and Carl Wikstrom

Staff present: Town Engineer Paul Vlasich, Public Works Director Steve Cronin, and Town Manager Russ Dean

Chair Huber called the meeting to order at 3 PM.

II. Approval of Minutes

December 21, 2023

Mr. Ingram motioned to approve the December 21, 2024 meeting minutes. Selectman Papakonstantis seconded the motion. A vote was taken, Mr. Biggins abstained, Mr. Jones was not yet present, the motion passed 5-0-2.

III. Update on River Related Issues (Paul Vlasich)

Siphon Project

Mr. Vlasich reported the project was going well until Tuesday when the drill rod broke, at a weld point, approximately 160' from the rig. There will be no additional costs to the Town as a lump sum fee was negotiated last year.

IV. VHB Presentation – Updates on Pickpocket Dam Draft Feasibility Study

Mr. Vlasich noted that Jacob San Antonio and Pete Walker from VHB were present.

39 Mr. Vlasich summarized the feasibility study progress to date noting a public information
40 meeting held most recently in February with today being the last day to receive public
41 comments.

42

43 Mr. Vlasich noted there were prioritized competing interests within the Town and
44 acknowledged funding partners.

45

46 Mr. Vlasich noted the dam received a deficiency letter in 2011, labeling it a high hazard dam
47 and presented slides showing costs for raising the dam, spillway replacement, an auxiliary
48 spillway and for dam removal.

49

50 Mr. San Antonio provided a hydrologic analysis explaining cubic feet per second and flow
51 rate under different scenarios, current and future predicted. He provided photos of the
52 Mother's Day Flood which he noted was a 50+ year storm. He made note of existing
53 components of the dam such as the fish ladder and low-level gate which he noted was
54 inoperable. He noted the concrete and earthen embankments were intact.

55

56 Mr. San Antonio discussed five of the options, the first being to raise the dam to 72.7'. He
57 noted the abutting homeowners did not like the extension configuration and preferred the
58 straight line over the 90-degree elbows. He provided a rendering photo of this option.

59

60 Mr. San Antonio noted the projected cost was \$3.6 million.

61

62 Mr. San Antonio discussed the second option briefly, to increase spillway capacity with a
63 labyrinth weir and raising the crest by 3'.

64

65 Mr. San Antonio noted the projected cost was \$10.8 million.

66

67 Mr. San Antonio noted the cost of the third option, the auxiliary spillway, was \$3.8 million.

68

69 Mr. San Antonio noted the cost of full dam removal is \$1.5 million and provided a rendering
70 photo noting there would be some maintenance costs the first few years.

71

72 Mr. San Antonio described the fifth option as taking no action – reducing hazard by razing
73 the home valued at \$544,000 and stabilizing the foundations of the four mobile residences
74 at a cost of approximately \$80,000. He indicated the bridge could be replaced or a
75 combination.

76

77 Mr. San Antonio described option #6 as lowering the normal pool and elevation of the
78 spillway crest.

79

80 Mr. San Antonio summarized that option 2 was eliminated due to high cost, and options #5
81 and #6 were eliminated as reduction/without benefit.

82

83 Mr. San Antonio discussed sediments and stabilization of banks with seeding. He provided
84 an analysis of water supplies and wells.

85

86 Mr. Walker provided an impact analysis of options #1, 3 and 4. He began by recognizing
87 cultural resources and sensitive native american archeological areas. He noted the dam
88 was built in 1920 and modified in 1969 and is eligible for the National Register of Historic
89 Places. He noted all options but no action would have an adverse effect.

90

91 Mr. Walker analyzed the impact on water quality and noted currently the dam lowers
92 dissolved oxygen and is rated Cl B impaired for aquatic life. He noted the dam increases
93 water temperature, algae and vegetation. He stated that dam removal would improve
94 water quality. There would need to be a plan to control invasive species.

95

96 Mr. Walker discussed fisheries and passage for Alewife and other species. He noted the
97 dam is a barrier to fish passage even with the fish ladder and removal would reconnect
98 14.1 miles of habitat. He discussed the reason the data contradicts the fish ascending the
99 fish ladder, noting they don't appear to make it there. He cited how removal of the Great
100 Dam has improved fish counts.

101

102 Mr. Walker discussed impacts on recreation such as boating, swimming, fishing and
103 skating noting the river would be shallower. He concluded that public involvement and
104 comment are fairly active.

105

106 Mr. Vlasich noted the final feasibility report deadline would be April 30th. The River Advisory
107 Committee would provide its recommendation to the Select Board and the Select Board
108 would have the final determination how to proceed. He noted he would like to have one
109 more meeting with RAC before then and proposed April 25th however Selectman
110 Papakonstantis expressed concerns with it being school vacation week and noted
111 comments had been received about that when they met vacation week in February. Chair
112 Huber indicated they would reach out with an alternative date.

113

114 Mr. Biggins asked how long construction would take and Mr. Vlasich indicated one
115 construction season starting in July and going through October

116
117 Mr. Ingram asked about Brentwood's involvement in the process. Russ Dean indicated
118 their Town Administrator was noticed before the public meeting. Mr. Ingram proposed that
119 if Brentwood wanted to keep the dam in place they could kick in a warrant article for \$1.5
120 million. He would like to know more as far as what their interest is.

121
122 Dan Jones asked about communications with Brentwood and Selectman Papakonstantis
123 noted Russ Dean has been communicating with them. Chair Huber expressed that they
124 are looking for the best safety solution and need input from all stakeholders. Mr. Jones
125 expressed concerns about bridge engineering and the mobile homes being built in the
126 flood plain without a permit, done after the fact and potentially false premises of the
127 deficiency.

128
129 Mr. Mattera asked about stabilization of the banks and sediment accretion by Court Street.
130 Mr. Walker provided slides and noted the dashed area showing change with dam removal.
131 Mr. Mattera noted it was low compared to other dams and there are reasons to push for
132 removal, environmental benefits and increased precipitation.

133
134 Chair Huber opened the meeting to public comment.

135
136 Robert Spam of Brentwood was given permission to comment. He noted he was an abutter
137 of the river, on Peabody Drive and expressed comments on impact to Brentwood and what
138 he referenced as reverse conservation. He noted the mobile home park and home will
139 eventually be inundated with or without these projects. He expressed comments on what
140 he described as mis-statements in the grant application such as public input and feedback
141 prior to the application, claims of Herring stacking up at the base of the dam. He asked
142 what evidence there is that the dam is a barrier. He noted Fish and Game stated the
143 Herring are not reaching the dam. He recommended correcting the record or reapplying so
144 that funds are not received under false pretenses.

145
146 Mr. Mattera commented on conservation and habitat restoration, values and benefits with
147 return to a free flowing river. He asked about the inundation to the houses downstream if
148 there were a catastrophic failure in a 100-yr. event which triggered reclassification as a high
149 hazard dam. Mr. Walker described the water being 1' above the first floor of the residence
150 and 8" in the mobile home park. Mr. Mattera note one is a water level rise the other is
151 failure sending a wave of water.

152

153 Kristen Span of Brentwood asked how public input would be addressed. Mr. Vlasich
154 indicated all questions are being compiled in a separate document to be answered when
155 the study is finalized.

156

157 Mr. Jones asked about the hazardous waste site of the old dump and the groundwater in
158 the landfill. Mr. Walker indicated contaminant transport would not change with dam in or
159 out.

160

161 V. Other Business

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163 VI. Public Comment

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165 VII. Adjournment

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167 **Mr. Biggins motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:54 PM. Selectman Papakonstantis**
168 **seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 7-0-0.**

169

170 Respectfully submitted,

171

172 Daniel Hoijer, Recording Secretary