

RIVER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, March 21, 2024

3 PM

Town Offices, Nowak Room

Approved 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 downstream water quality is rated Class B impaired for aquatic life.  
93 He noted the dam increases water temperature, algae and vegetation. He stated that dam  
94 removal would improve water quality. There would need to be a plan to control invasive  
95 species.

96

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

102

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

106

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

114

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

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

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

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

134  
135 Chair Huber opened the meeting to public comment.

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

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

153

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

157

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

161

162 V. Other Business

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164 VI. Public Comment

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166 VII. Adjournment

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

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171 Respectfully submitted,

172

173 Daniel Hoijer, Recording Secretary