

**53 River St Committee Meeting**

**Acton Recreation Department**

**50 Audubon Dr Acton**

**August 15 2018**

Present: Entire committee is present except for Bill Allesbury and Cami Duquette. Various members of the public attended.

Called to Order 7pm by Bill Klauer, Vice Chair

1 Citizen's concerns: David Honn said they were getting auto notices of the meetings, but did not receive them this week. Selby will look into it.

2 Minutes from August 1 as corrected were unanimously approved.

3. Cultural Resources Discussion led by Barbara Donohue. She is an historic restoration consultant, and worked on a dam removal in Pepperell. Her outline was included in the package for us to review. Often 2-4 years of studies are done prior to the archeologist study. MHC (Mass Historical Commission) looks for historic and prehistoric resources. In Pepperell, there was a mill pond, a dam, and water features. Reconnaissance survey, a mini report was produced of what is expected to be found in area. Then a documentary desktop survey was delivered, then field reconnaissance. Documents highlighted many features of the former mill. Then a report is produced from a synthesis of the studies. Archeologic features and these reports are not publicly accessible generally speaking, but only for archeologists, to maintain the site integrity. MHC will review and determine what information can be provided for public consumption.

We applied for a grant from the DER, to be granted a priority projects status, and help us to figure out what should be done with this dam. We should have a response in September. Office of Dam Safety assessed the dam but we do not have that report yet. Barbara suggested that we should wait and see what these reports show. DER permits are required if we decide to modify the dam. MHC would have the project notification form. They will let us know if they need more information, or what suggested steps are needed. The property is on the cultural resource list, and is also in the historic district. We are very early in this process, but we will need to apply for CPA funds soon. Is there a flow chart for us to follow? None known of, Barbara stated.

Prepare a plan to remove the dam without disturbing the archeological site. The archeologist would be on site as construction/destruction begins on dam, to make sure sensitive areas are fenced off. But again, we are still too early in the process. We need to determine if the dam is safe, or needs to be fixed. Housing area that is proposed should be studied for archeological sensitivity. The state and environmental agencies prefer to remove the dams. DER will not fund the repair of this dam. The hydro studies will determine whether we breach or remove the dam. MHC determined what was to be done, then DER put out a proposal on the Pepperell dam.

We are fairly sure there is archeological historic and possibly pre historic sensitive areas at 53 River Street. Barbara is offering a reconnaissance survey, and is not allowed to disturb the site during this phase. MHC may ask for a shovel test for pre historic sensitivity. The town ordered an archeological sensitivity study done, of whole town, which did not find this site sensitive.

Barbara suggested that hydrologic studies should take precedence. We will get 3 quotes on the hydrologic work. The standard process for MHC is to decide whether we need further study, after the form is sent, and then to determine what they think should be done with any sensitive sites. We should call DER to get a flow chart to get this project completed. Long term maintenance will need to be planned for. Freedom of information act does not apply to sensitive archeological sites, for the safety of the site, from looting, willful destruction, etc.

Next Steps: We need to determine whether the houses downstream of the dam would be impacted by its removal. Is 1000 FT up and down stream enough? What is their modeling based on? Is DEM, Digital Elevation Method adequate? Peter will speak to Walter Foster to determine if the hydro study will be/could be funded by CPC. We will be focused on the water issue at next meeting. Peter will put a list together of all the studies needed. Tom Christopher will present in Early September, and DER rep will present in late Sept.

Meeting adjourned at 830pm.

Respectfully submitted by Michele Holland