



WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

May 2, 2024

7:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

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

Chairperson: Joe Robb

Clerk: Ron Parenti

Others in Attendance: Alissa Nicol (Select Board Liaison) and Kim Kastens

1. Opening

WRAC chair Joe Robb opened the meeting at 7:05 PM.

2. Regular Business

- A. Public Remarks/Comments – Kim Kastens Informed the Committee of two recent articles in the Acton Exchange that relate to environmental issues. The first discusses a program to train new volunteers on the proper methods to obtain water samples using canoes deployed along the Assabet river. This training session was organized by the Organization for the Assabet River (OARS). The second report discusses an article on Concord's Town Meeting Warrant that asks the Town to authorize a \$50m expenditure for Nagog Pond improvements and PFAS mitigation. Concord officials propose to build a new treatment plant in Concord and construct a new water line to transmit raw water from Nagog Pond to the treatment plant. This action could have significant implications for the Acton Water District, since Concord currently supplies treated water from Nagog Pond to a number of Acton residences and businesses along Great Road. It is unclear if Concord will continue to service these customers after the new water line is constructed. Alissa Nicol asked a question about Concord's request to authorize \$50m at such an early stage of the planning process, and Matt Mostoller replied that it was probably related to the need to place the program in the queue for the State's revolving fund for drinking water treatment.
- B. Review Minutes from 28 March 2024 – A motion to approve the minutes for 29 February 2024 was made by Matt Mostoller and seconded by Barry Rosen. Matt Mostoller, Barry Rosen, Ron Parenti, and Joe Robb voted to approve the minutes; Mike Geis did not attend that meeting, and abstained.
- C. Develop List of Discussion Topics for Future Meeting with QinRui – Joe Robb reminded the Committee that the Select Board has made it clear that one of WRAC's first priorities should be an investigation of new stormwater management approaches. A meeting on 23 May has been scheduled with the Town Engineer, QinRui Pang, and the Town's stormwater consultant, Woodard & Curran, to discuss this issue. Robb noted that Woodard & Curran issued a lengthy report in 2023, in which the current state of the



Town's stormwater infrastructure was reviewed and recommendations for future improvements were provided. Predictions of the impacts of climate change were also included in this report. Cost estimates for the recommended improvements to culverts, basins, and related infrastructure are in the range of \$6m. The Stormwater Feasibility Study performed by Tighe & Bond for Concord New Hampshire was also mentioned as an excellent resource for the Committee's investigation. Robb indicated that he had several questions for QinRui, which included the annual cost of maintaining the current stormwater infrastructure, the Engineering Department's opinion about the need for a stormwater utility, and the results of any analyses that the Town may have performed to evaluate the benefits of a stormwater utility.

There was general agreement that the WRAC needs to understand how the stormwater infrastructure is currently maintained and the annual cost of maintenance. With regard to projected cost of a stormwater utility, Barry Rosen noted that the referendum for the proposed tax increase override had passed by an extremely thin margin and that voters would be reluctant to support an additional fee for this new utility. As part of the planning process, Rosen suggested that the Town's Engineering Department complete a detailed cost spreadsheet included the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) toolkit; however, it was noted that the WRAC cannot request Town staff to perform this task.

The availability of recent flood plain maps was also discussed. Nicol informed the Committee that all of the projects currently being considered by the Select Board refer to maps generated in 2014, and recommended the use of updated maps in any future stormwater planning exercise. Kastens stated that the First Street Foundation can be contracted to develop updated maps.

Following this discussion, Robb emailed Committee members his suggested list of questions for the next meeting, which are shown below.

Questions for the Town Engineer:

1. Can you detail how much Acton has spent annually for the past few years on stormwater infrastructure management?
2. Can you clarify the level of funding included in the FY25 Town Budget for stormwater infrastructure? How does the budgeted amount compare to the 5-year or 10-year Annual Estimated Capital Funding Needs included in Section 6 of the Asset Management Plan?
3. Currently the town funds stormwater management and compliance activities through the municipal budget. Section 6.4.4 of the Asset Management Plan states "An additional funding strategy that may provide a sustainable and transparent funding source for the Town is proposing a stormwater utility fee." In your opinion, which is the correct approach for the future of Acton, and why?
4. Do you believe the Town of Acton needs to consider a Stormwater Utility, like we have for sewers, water, and electricity and why?



5. Has the Acton Land Use Department performed any evaluation of the need for a stormwater utility? If so, what analyses were performed and what tools were used?
6. Do you think a stormwater utility feasibility study would be beneficial to the Town, and why?

Questions for Woodard and Curran:

1. In several sections of the Asset Management Plan, Woodard and Curran recommended Acton develop a town-wide hydrologic and hydraulic (H&H) model of its drainage system to better understand sources of flooding and deficiencies present within the municipal drain system. What are the implications of not having an H&H model now? How does Woodard and Curran develop recommendations regarding the hydraulic adequacy of our stormwater conveyance without a quantitative analysis?
2. Section 4.2 of the Climate Impact Assessment says “The Town may wish to update its Hazard Mitigation Plan (MAPC, 2018) to reflect a need for additional detention and drainage capacity to adapt to climate change and reduce flood hazard.” Do the cost estimates provided in Section 6 of the Asset Management Plan include costs to update the Hazard Mitigation Plan?

The procedure for reviewing and revising this list was discussed, and it was agreed that Parenti would post a draft of the questions on DocuShare and solicit comments from Committee members. The questions would then be revised, posted on DocuShare, and sent to QinRui, Andrea Becerra, and Woodard and Curran prior to the meeting on the 23rd.

D. Any Other New Business – Ron Parenti informed the Committee that David Boccuti has been appointed by the Select Board to the position of Associate WRAC Member. Parenti initiated a conversation about Concord’s plan to install a large power storage facility on Knox Trail, and asked if Committee members had concerns about the possibility the fire suppressant used might contain PFAS chemicals. A discussion about possible actions that could be taken by WRAC followed, but Mostoller recommended against any involvement at this time since Concord’s plans for the lithium battery installation are still in an early stage of development. The Committee will continue to monitor Concord’s deliberations about the placement of this installation.

3. Adjournment

Committee members agreed to hold their next meeting on 23 May 2024 at 7pm to discuss stormwater issues with QinRui. A motion to adjourn was made by Barry Rosen and seconded by Matt Mostoller. The motion to adjourn was approved unanimously at 8:15 pm.