

## 53 River Street Master Plan Special Committee Minutes

4-18-18

Acton Recreation Center, 50 Audubon Drive

Prepared by Michele Holland

Present: Selby (staff), Michele Holland, John Cook, Camille Duquet, Don Boyle, Bettina Abe (staff), Eliza Cress (Conway School), Amanda Pebler (Conway School), Peter Hocknell, Peter Berry (chair), William Klauer (vice chair), and Bob Whittlesey

Guests: David Hown (105 School St.), Kathryn Acerbo-Bachmann (50 River St.), Heather Morton (1 River St.)

Peter Berry called the meeting to order at 7pm.

Amanda and Eliza were introduced to the meeting, describing their backgrounds. Both are working on their MS in Ecological Design.

Heather Morton stated she has a deck that overlooks Fort Pond Brook, where she observes a great deal of wildlife. She asked that we try to maintain the natural habitat especially for smaller animals and birds. She asked if there is a conflict between dogs that are allowed to run in such places as Great Hill, disturbing the wildlife. Mass Audubon does not allow dogs on their properties. Town of Acton allows that dogs be on a leash or under vocal control. It was stated that most people in Acton would support these ecological concerns. Evidence of large turtles have been discovered at the dam.

Eliza and Amanda discussed the timeline of this project. Today they reviewed the various maps and documents at town hall with Selby, and then walked the site at 5pm. Based on these preliminary discoveries, they plan to present to a public forum on May 9<sup>th</sup> at 7pm at the Rec Room, unless the Town Hall can be secured (Town Hall was subsequently secured). The team will provide publicity flyers for distribution to the public. The Beacon, Action Unlimited, Acton Recreation Dept, and Acton Senior Center as well as local public places around town were suggested to post these fliers. The purpose of this meeting is to invite questions and comments and feedback.

On May 25, the team will present their initial designs to their instructors at the school after having analyzed data and taking into consideration the history and ecological concerns of this site. This meeting will also be open to the public. They were asked if they had an idea of the costs at this point. The final design will have costs associated with the plans. The final plans are expected before the end of June 2018. The question of foreseen challenges came up. Eliza stated that there was more potential than problems, but did also state that the narrowness of the site would affect the overall design. The question of making River St. one way was discussed. Amanda stated they could present 3 options, in case a decision had not been made by the time their final designs were ready. It was stated that if the dam is removed, the uplands may be affected. If River St. was one way, then parking would be viable on one side. Sidewalks would also add to the walkability of the site. Since the team is contracted to attending no more than five meetings, it was suggested that a conference phone could be used to have them call into the next committee meeting on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, for any final questions, before

the public meeting on May 9<sup>th</sup>. They confirmed they would participate by phone. It was suggested that the students compile a list of helpful contacts, such as Iron Works Farm, who owns the Tavern and the Hosmer House, in particular Anne Forbes. It was also suggested that state funds may be available and to consult with Jamie Eldridge for possible funds. It was also mentioned that the Assabet River Rail Trail bike trail would be good to connect to. Tom Tidman and Bettina Abe are the contacts to the team at Conway for the three weeks that Selby will be out of the country (May 23-June 13) should there be any questions.

A reminder was made to be sure to follow open meeting rules when communicating.

David Honn suggested the team do a macro study of the South Acton area, and then drill down to the neighborhood, and to tie in the history of the site and area. Bettina will loan the "Mill Corner" booklet for the team's study.

Peter asked the guests how they felt about River being a one way street, and since there is already traffic that moves too fast, they were in agreement that it would be helpful in slowing down commuters. But they had concerns about allowing parking. They also asked that the character of the area be maintained. It was also mentioned that the water has distinctive changes with heavy rains, and to keep that if possible. Also leaving the natural debris is best but remove the trash.

One question came up from Kathy. How will we close off the park area at nightfall, but allow the residence to move around their area. Will it be difficult to keep residents out of the nearby park? Traffic and commuter parking were mentioned as possible issues.

The minutes from the 3-21-18 meeting were reviewed and accepted without amendments.

New business was discussed. We may want to do an archeological study first. This might cost around \$10-15,000. The purchase of this project happened outside of the Community Preservation Act funding cycle, so funds were taken from free cash to complete the purchase. It has been suggested that FinCom will ask that we apply for CPA funds to pay back the general fund. This project would qualify under the open space, recreation and historic preservation and (potentially) community housing aspects of the CPA.

Can the town move the big cement blocks from the site so the site could be better visualized? Per Tom Tidman, the conservation commission has approved the removal. DPW wants some of these blocks, and can find takers for the rest.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm.