



## WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

April 24, 2019

7:00 PM

Acton Water District HQ Conference Room

693 Massachusetts Avenue

Acton, MA 01720

**Present:** Lucy Kirshner, Matthew Mostoller, Robert Sekuler, Barry Rosen. Joan Gardner (BoS Liaison joined the meeting at a later time after attending another committee meeting).

**Absent:** Ron Beck

**Chairperson:** Lucy Kirshner (vice chairperson)

**Clerk:** Barry Rosen

### 1. Opening

Chairperson Kirshner opened the meeting at 7:00 PM ET. A quorum was present along with one guest.

### 2. Regular Business

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes – The minutes of the WRAC meeting held on March 14, 2019 were approved by a vote of 3 yes and 1 abstention.

B. Citizen's Comments/Remarks:

- a. Ms. Kastens told us about a joint effort of the League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle and the League of Women Voters of the Acton Area forming a fact finding group (half from Acton and half from Concord "...who would research the water supply at Nagog Pond and associated aquifers used by Concord residents and some Acton residents." [League press release.] The group would expand if they are able to recruit a Littleton member. From the information available, they intend to look at a broad group of questions involving water rights, ownership issues, practices in various areas of the US, the "Nagog Pond watershed...streams and wetlands does it support." Lori Cooney (Acton) and Judy Zaunbrecher (Concord) will be the co-chairs.
- b. Ms. Kastens also reported that Carolyn Kiely (who was not able to attend this meeting) had obtained a copy of Concord's license and permit applications for Nagog Pond. Green Acton has been in contact with Mass DEP about them.
- c. The 5-year anniversary of Grace is upon us so it's comment time. Ms. Kastens has spoken with the new EPA person that has been assigned to the Grace clean-up. Jim Synder-Grant (representing Green Acton) has also made comments to



him. A main issue cited was that the communication between EPA and the constituents has been poor. Ms. Kasten asked that 1,4 dioxane be added to the list of pollutants. Additionally, she requested that a public information session should be scheduled.

- C. Report from Ms. Gardner re: WRAC Membership: Ms. Gardner reported back to the committee that our membership list has been corrected. We now have 5 members and two unfilled associate member slots available to us.
- D. Continuation of Discussion and review the Next Version of “Actionable Items From The Water Workshop”: The newest version (produced by Mr. Beck) of the document was emailed to all of the committee members for review and comment at this meeting. *[A copy of the document is attached to the minutes of this meeting.]* The chair asked each attendee for their comments on the document.
  - a. Mr. Sekuler prefaced his comments by asking that the committee “...not get down into the weeds.” He asked that we not get into the grammar or wording but keep the level of discussion higher (maybe at the 5,000 foot level). *A number of the comments were similar or greatly overlapped so no attribution is provided for most of them.*
  - b. Too vague. We need more specifics before we provide this to the BoS.
  - c. Need a time line.
  - d. Interactions with the town. The meaning of this needs a better explanation.
  - e. We need to flush out some time and money estimates better.
  - f. Mention that we expect to be working with some A-B students who we want to contribute. *[See Mr. Rivero’s “homework” assignment from the last meeting.]*
  - g. The working name is Water 2050. Most liked the name and the forward looking intent of the title. Good time scale.
  - h. Group felt that Section D (Common Vision for Acton’s Future) could use more emphasis. Possibly renaming this section.
    - i. Good idea to keep Education and Enforcement together.
    - j. Liked the categories listed – liked the direction.
  - k. It is difficult to know/understand that this came from the water workshop. There is **no evidence trail** to indicate that. Include some questions from the water workshop.
    - l. Mr. Mostoller stated that we have spreadsheet evidence that can be used.
    - m. Underlining the deliverables is a good idea. Not sure that #1 is necessary.
    - n. Section D might be a funny way to deal with demand. Maybe renaming it is the answer?



E. Moving Forward: After considerable discussion, the group consensus was that there was a lot to do in this proposed project. It could take a considerable amount of time. During a long term project, there can be many changes including changes in the BoS membership. The thinking is that having a product of work to show in a year would be the best way to proceed. Breaking the study into smaller parts seems to be a good way to approach it. We can then go further.

- a. Ms. Kastens suggested that water demand/future water demand is a sweet spot with which to begin.
- b. Mr. Rosen thought that education and enforcement seem to be connected with demand.
- c. Ms. Kastens believes that we can look at town GIS maps to look at the large empty parcels that can be developed to help us with the demand section.
- d. We will add a concept plan of development.
- e. There was some discussion of how empty parcels are not always good indicators of possible development and demand.

### **3. New/Special Business**

- A. Additional Methods of Disseminating Information: Discussion postponed to another meeting.
- B. Discussion of WRAC Officers Going Forward: The members would like to have the elected chairperson present at more of the meetings and would like to discuss this during the next committee meeting prior to deciding on new officers for the coming year. It was also mentioned that Ms. Carolyn Kiely is interested in joining the WRAC. She has submitted her application to the VCC but was not able to attend this evening's meeting due to a family issue. Another name was also mentioned as a possible candidate. A WRAC member was assigned to contact the individual to determine if there is interest.
- C. Next WRAC Meeting: The next meeting of the committee will be held on Wednesday, May 8, 2019 beginning at 7:00 PM in the conference room of the Acton Water District HQ building, 693 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA 01720.

### **4. Adjournment:**

On a motion to adjourn by Mr. Sekuler and seconded by Ms. Kirshner, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM by a unanimous vote.



## Acton Water Policy Plan Scope Areas Suggested by outcomes of September Water Workshop 4-23-2019 V3

### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Acton WRAC, following the September 2018 Water Workshop many stakeholders (BOS, Finance, Planning, AWD and others) participated in, has spent the past five months turning the extensive information from that workshop into an actionable plan.

Water resources encompasses surface and groundwater quality, drinking water supply and protection, wastewater minimization and treatment, and wetland protection.

It was the consensus of the committee, confirming a clear water workshop finding, that there ARE important questions that policy makers seek answers to in making decisions impacting town water resources and the answers are not readily accessible today.

It is now eight months later, and WRAC requests the Acton Board of Selectmen (BOS) to charter us immediately to begin work on “Acton Water 2050”, (water2050) A Long Range Water Resources Policy Plan, which was originally voted for at the 2017 Town Meeting and the need for which was also confirmed in the September 2018 Water Workshop.

This policy plan can largely be accomplished through the work of WRAC but is a large undertaking, even though we've defined a bounded scope, and also will require;

- commitment and engagement of key needed resources (Town staff representatives, Acton Water District, a BOS representative, preferably a finance representative, and public advocacy parties such as Green Acton and OARS)
- modest town budget resource, including for an outside resource for facilitation of public meetings
- creativity in how to reach people for participation and education and
- ongoing support from BOS.

The key Water Workshop outcomes, that WRAC believe are actionable focus areas for the Acton Water 2030 Study are as follows:

- A. Outreach to the town. This will be a driving element, together with the next topic education, and will be continued throughout.

The rest of the focus areas will be undertaken sequentially:

- B. Water resource EDUCATION and ENFORCEMENT. The study will develop recommendations for education for town staff, town boards, and the Acton public. This will include basic information as to location of wells and how they are recharged, meaning of protection zones, and town water cycle and water interrelationships. This is closely linked to enforcement. Good enforcement of already on the books protection bylaws and rules, will only happen with an educated public. A key deliverable will be an ongoing education plan.
- C. Future water SUPPLY AND AVAILABILITY. There is not a consensus today as to the level of risk and uncertainty regarding future water supply for Acton, and what the risk is that it becomes a constraint on the demand and growth scenarios. In this area, the focus



of Water2050 will be to assemble and characterize existing studies and data, report on uncertainties and unknowns, evaluate the likelihood of contamination scenarios. Consequently, a key deliverable will be to develop and report on a picture of the supply alternatives, likely future order of magnitude costs, benefits, and uncertainties. Similar to above, the key stakeholders will be engaged to ensure a consensus on assessment of the existing information and need for new information. Please note that demand and supply are two different topics. It is true that demand can be reactively managed when supply becomes the constraint; but it is appropriate to proactively understand and plan both, rather than forced to be simply reactive, as the town is today.

D. Common Vision for Acton's Future. Future water demand SCENARIOS. There is not a consensus today as to future water demand forecasts. An important focus area for Water2030 will be to engage key stakeholders in reaching consensus of the most important alternative future scenarios (sustainable growth, current growth, maximum growth) and understand the range of future demand that should form the basis for future protection and development efforts. Demand scenarios and their explanation and basis will be a key deliverable of the study.

Aspects of this will include the several methodologies for translating growth into water demand.

E. Water-related policy decision making MATRIX. All workshop participants stated the need to help understand impacts of individual decisions on water supply quantity, water supply quality and water demand. Water2030 will spend considerable time and effort developing an easy to use matrix; whose key users would be town staff, town boards and committees and AWD. The matrix will be a key deliverable of the study.

A decision-making/consequences matrix will help make the tradeoffs town decisionmakers and the public faces easier to understand, more transparent, and inform each decision to be made with the benefits and costs of different choices. The decision matrix would provide a framework for town staff, policy making entities, (BOS, FinCom, AWD, Con-Com, BOH as examples) and other stakeholders (such as Green Acton) to understand and assess implications of proposed projects and activities on water resources and constraints.

The rows would include activity types such as housing projects, commercial projects, 40B projects, overlain by water protection zones and various risk factors. The columns would include impact types such as supply quantity impacts, contaminant risk impacts, recharge impacts, surface water impacts, waste water and solid/hazardous waste treatment and disposal impacts. The matrix would contain, for each cell, a roadmap for decisionmaking that incorporates a key list of most likely impacts that need evaluation, tools and resources to evaluate, and which groups or persons are best qualified to provide needed analysis.



F. Water quality, water use, and water supply ACTION AND REPORTING. The Water2050 will evaluate the needs for regular citizen and decisionmaker reporting, the role that reporting has in both education and policy making. A deliverable of the study will be to develop an action and reporting plan leading to a culture of regular water reporting specifically and environmental reporting in general.

## **APPENDIX: EXTRA DETAIL**

### **A-1: EDUCATION**

The study will develop recommendations for education for town staff, town boards, and the Acton public. This will include basic information as to location of wells and how they are recharged, meaning of protection zones, and town water cycle and water interrelationships.

All people living and businesses operating in Acton have an impact on both the Town's water supply and water quality and therefore have a responsibility for their behavior. Decisions made by our Town's government related to building and development also impact our water resources both immediately and in the future. Consequently, constituents and policy makers need a broad understanding of our current water resource management practices. While only four of the questions collected at the workshop specifically mentioned public knowledge and education, almost all of the questions suggested a need for more public understanding.

#### Key Education Questions:

- Who should set the agenda for Public Education?
- Who should shoulder the cost of Public Education?
- Who should carry out the agenda?
- How should public education be delivered?

### **A-2: REPORTING**

Many of the water workshop questions lead to the need for the developing a framework for regular town wide reporting, both to policymakers and the public, as to the trends and key performance indicators of how the town is doing relative to water quality, quantity, and protection. Associated information as to the changes imposed by each major policy decision made should also be provided.

This area of the report may include developing templates for different town departments and staff to use in creating regular reports on a consistent basis. Also, the way data is stored today (some of it currently by hand and on paper forms) will come into this aspect of the report. To make this report evergreen, reporting on how the town is performing, with respect to water quality goals and risks, is critical both in terms of creating transparency for all decisionmakers, stakeholders, and public as well as to create a fact-based understanding of whether the interlocking elements of water are "getting better" or "getting worse".