



53 RIVER STREET MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 5, 2019
7:00 PM
ACTON RECREATION CENTER, 50 AUDUBON DRIVE

Present: Peter Berry, Bill Klauer, Stephanie Krantz, Peter Hocknell, Lou York, Bill Alesbury, Don Boyle, Bettina Abe (Staff).

Absent: Matthew 'Selby' (Staff).

1. Opening

Chair Peter Berry called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. Regular Business

- A. A quorum is present.
- B. Committee membership is proposed to change from 10 full members to 8, with 2 associates. Peter Berry will try and get on the next Board of Selectmen agenda. Also, Ilana Liebert Dasilva has volunteered to join the committee, been vetted through the VCC, and recommended for appointment.
- C. River Street Dam Removal Feasibility Study: Andie Green and Jim Murac from Milone & MacBroom (MMI) provided an overview of the study and answered questions from both the committee and citizens in the audience. Key points are summarized below:
 - a. MMI is still working on the state-required dam Emergency Action Plan (EAP). The feasibility portion of the plan has been completed; however, additional advanced floodplain mapping activities are ongoing.
 - b. In short, MMI concludes the dam can be safely removed and provided recommendations for how to best accomplish this.
 - c. MMI estimates requiring removal of approximately 300 cubic yards (~6-7 dump trucks' worth) of impounded sediment from immediately upstream of the dam.
 - d. The fact the area has been significantly revegetated over time is a benefit to stabilizing the soils and ecosystem in general.



- e. The channel itself is undersized, which is typical for a milldam site.
- f. The stone walls present constrict the channel, concentrating energy down the floodplain. Widening of the channel would be required in order to help distribute this energy more evenly.
- g. MMI proposes the new channel construction begin approximately 150 feet upstream of the dam. The southern dam wall could likely be kept as an historic artifact. Roughly 30-40 feet “bankfull” would be needed, plus additional “passive floodplain”. The goal is to provide a “right-sized channel”, based on the site’s topography.
- h. The slope through the channel area was determined to be suitable for fish and aquatic life migration.
- i. Proposed riffle features (i.e. stones placed in the channel) will help aerate the water.
- j. Proposed willow plantings will aid in shading / cooling the water.
- k. The historic stone piers located in the channel can be kept. However, they will likely accumulate debris, tree branches, etc. and maintenance will be required.
- l. MMI recommends filling in the Tail Race section. The water there will likely stagnate, providing a breeding ground for mosquitoes, and will not offer much aesthetic benefit. The proposed widening of the channel would provide increased wetland area. This will be discussed with the Conservation Commission.
- m. MMI estimates roughly 10% of the original dam structure will remain, according to their current design.
- n. In terms of the flood impact downstream, there will be no appreciable negative impact once the dam is removed.
- o. However, upstream of the dam there is a railroad bridge support that will need a scour evaluation study performed, as the lack of an impoundment area would lead to increased water velocity in that specific area.
- p. A 1976 Flood Insurance Study (FIS) indicated that the presence of three dams in Fort Pond Brook could have an effect on flooding. The dams referenced were the Merriam (already breached), Cement (believed to be the 53 River Street dam), and Erikson dams. The relatively small impoundment area of the 53 River Street



dam is estimated to only take roughly 1.4 hours to fill; this would not significantly aid in flood control.

- q. Lou noted the appendices were not included with the draft report. The MMI attendees indicated they will be provided with the final report.
- r. In terms of the models used by MMI to prepare the EAP, initially peak flow data were analyzed from Nashoba Brook and the Assabet River. MMI ended up using FEMA data due to the fact, in their opinion, they were “more defensible” (i.e. higher) as compared to Nashoba or Assabet.
- s. The delivery date for the EAP is “to be determined”, but the MMI staff is aware it is due to the Town by 31 DEC 2019.
- t. The question of sediment was raised. MMI estimates much has traveled downstream already; approximately 4,200 cubic yards.
- u. The Cost estimates provided in the draft report Table 7-2 were then discussed. It is estimated 12-18 months will be needed for design and permitting. Permitting would begin at the 60% design stage. It is unknown at this time whether any archeological investigation will be needed. Site restoration may be able to be postponed to save money, apart from immediate grass reseeding. The construction period is estimated to take 2-3 months. For line item #9 in Table 7-2, it was noted by MMI that if the soil is determined to be clean, that cost would drop to zero, and the material could potentially be repurposed onsite. Also, the site demolition could be done as a separate project (i.e. an enabling phase), apart from the dam removal itself.
- v. In terms of project complexity, the staff from MMI referred to it as “relatively straightforward”; on a scale of 1-10 (10 being most difficult), they estimate this dam as a 1 or a 2.
- w. In terms of benefits of the 53 River Street dam site, MMI noted that much of the existing sediment is already vegetating, there are not many bridges nearby, a good staging area is present in the parking lot, the mill race itself can be used for water diversion during the dam and berm removal.
- x. In terms of flooding risk downstream, removal of the dam eliminates the risk of catastrophic dam failure. It is anticipated there will be no worsening to downstream bridge abutments or residents’ yards.

D. Citizens' concerns: A citizen asked the report to include remnants of the property's industrial past. He feels the proposed dam removal would no longer represent the history of the site. He also asked that an inventory of historic items discovered at the site be



taken and be potentially repurposed. MMI added that aspects of the dam that are perpendicular to the water flow are an issue, due to flow impediment, but that parallel aspects potentially could remain.

- E. CPA Application: It was debated whether this committee should apply for the full amount provided in the design quote from MMI, but then cut it down later into project phases. Bettina indicated the Town is pursuing a MA Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant, where the town pays upfront and is then reimbursed at 75% after. The Town is also exploring a grant through the MA Dam and Seawall Repair or Removal Program. Bill Alesbury asked to see ballpark total costs including a conceptual park design. Peter Berry indicated the Town Manager has allocated in the proposed budget \$138,000 from free cash towards the dam removal. This could fund the design and permitting phases potentially. Based on this, it was proposed the committee withdraw the CPC application.
- F. Approval of Meeting Minutes from the November 5, 2019 Meeting: Motion to accept the minutes, without amendment, was made by Don Boyle and seconded by Bill Klauer. Approval by voice vote was unanimous.
- G. The next meeting will be Tuesday, January 7, 2020. The Annual Report from this committee to the Board of Selectmen will be on the agenda; it is due January 17.
- H. Letters to abutting residents: Lou will work on this; he needs a draft that Selby and Bettina have been working on.
- I. Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 pm made by Lou York and seconded by Bill Alesbury. Approval by voice vote was unanimous.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting:

- Meeting Agenda for December 5, 2019
- Draft minutes from the November 5, 2019 committee meeting
- Community Preservation Act (CPA) project application
- Milone & MacBroom document: **2019-11-06 Concept Design-Feasibility Study**
- Milone & MacBroom document: **2019-11-10 rpt draft Feas Study**