



WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
November 29, 2022
7:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

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

Chairperson: Mike Geis

Clerk: Ron Parenti

Others in Attendance: Fran Arsenault (Select Board), Kim Kastens, and Terra Friedrichs.

1. Opening

WRAC chair Mike Geis opened the meeting at 7:05 PM.

2. Regular Business

A. Review Minutes – The draft minutes from 3 November with modifications suggested by Matt Mostoller and Joe Robb were reviewed. A motion to approve the amended minutes was made by Barry Rosen and seconded by Mike Geis; the minutes were approved by a unanimous roll-call vote of the board members in attendance.

B. Public Remarks/Comments – Kim Kastens reported on a recent water conductivity survey of the Fort Pond Brook tributaries conducted by Green Acton in conjunction with OARS, which uncovered several hot spots that are likely due to road salt contamination in the SuAsCo watershed. Kastens indicated that one of the areas of high conductivity is located near the Town's transfer station. This led to a discussion about how salt at the DPW building is stored and how vehicles are washed. Kastens noted that the Town is in the process of renovating the DPW building and intends to address these concerns. Barry Rosen noted that the level of sodium in drinking water is regulated and reported by the Acton Water District.

Terra Friedrichs expressed her support of the position paper outline drafted by Joe Robb, which was posted on DocuShare in advance of the meeting.

C. Discussion of Water Resources Position Paper Outline – Joe Robb reviewed his draft position paper outline for the Committee. The outline includes the following topics:

- 1) Zoning
- 2) Water Supply Management
- 3) Stormwater Management
- 4) Wastewater Management
- 5) PFAS Contamination
- 6) Connection to Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA)



In addressing the first of these topics, Joe Robb stated that he had used the Town's GIS map to investigate the overlap between developed areas in Acton and the Zone I, II, and III protection zones. He expressed his surprise at finding that the amount of overlap was significant. Barry Rosen noted that the Town has established its own water protection zones that are not necessarily identical to those set by the Water District, and emphasized that the Town is responsible for enforcing compliance with those zones. Although Matt Mostoller was not present at this meeting, Rosen indicated that he held similar opinions on the importance of GWP zoning enforcement, and suggested that WRAC should engage with the Select Board to educate them about the hazards of development within the water protection zones. Joe Robb suggested that he, Barry Rosen, and Matt Mostoller establish a subcommittee to formulate a position paper on this topic as a means to inform both the Select Board and the general public. Fran Arsenault supported this approach, and suggested that WRAC ask for time on a future Select Board agenda to discuss these concerns.

During the discussion of water supply issues, Joe Robb, expressed concern about the lack of data regarding the long-range water supply limits established by the local aquifer hydrogeology. Committee members noted that the number of additional wells that might be drilled in the future is limited by a number of factors, including well density, water quality, and the requirement to designate protection zones for each new well. This was followed by a discussion of the possibility of connecting to MWRA, the cost of which is highly dependent on the number of local towns that also wish to connect. Rosen noted that the Water District will need to make a firm decision on a connection to MWRA within the next few years, but that it may take as long as 15 years to actually connect to that source. In the interim, the Water District would need to install the required treatment for PFAS and meet any new water quality standards that might be issued. Currently, the Water District is leasing the equipment needed for PFAS remediation at the North Acton Treatment Plant. In answer to a question from Kim Kastens about the high cost of treatment, Barry Rosen reminded the Committee that the Water District has the ability to add a tax to the property tax bills issued by the Town but has never invoked this option.

Ron Parenti suggested that the WRAC develop a comprehensive accounting of the current output capacity of each of the District's wells, which would include withdrawal restrictions established by the Water District to minimize color problems and contamination levels. Rosen noted that some of the District's wells are currently used infrequently due to heavy mineral or color content, or operated below the registered supply capacity in an effort to reduce PFAS levels. This type of detailed information about the District's water sources is not readily available to the public. Parenti also informed the Committee that he and Mike Geis had attended both the Select Board and Finance Committee meetings during the week of 21 November, and had subsequently received an email from FinCom member Adam Nolde inquiring about WRAC's concerns. WRAC will have an opportunity to present its concerns at the next FinCom meeting on 10 January. It was subsequently decided that a subcommittee consisting of Barry Rosen, Joe Robb, and Matt Mostoller would be formed to develop a position paper



on zoning issues, and that Mike Geis and Ron Parenti would establish a second subcommittee to collect educational materials related to water supply concerns.

In addition to his position paper outline, Joe Robb also prepared a budget for a compressive town-wide study that might follow the Great Road study that has just been initiated by Wright-Pierce. His cost estimate for this work was \$475,000, and he presented an Excel spreadsheet with time and labor rate estimates to support this number. Kim Kastens suggested that the Committee look into the cost of the Town's recent Climate Acton Plan to compare with Robb's estimate. Terra Friedrichs encouraged the Committee to draft a proposal for funding in the range of \$40k for a consultant to help the WRAC structure a problem statement for a comprehensive water resources study.

- D. WRAC Contribution to Acton's Annual Report -- Parenti informed the Committee that the Town will soon issue notices to all committees asking for contribution to the Annual Report, and asked the members to submit suggestions for this year's report.
- E. Creation of Resource Document Library on DocuShare -- Parenti asked the Committee members if they thought it would be useful to establish a library in the WRAC DocuShare directory to hold documents related to issues discussed by the Committee. The members supported this idea, although Kim Kastens warned that the posting of articles downloaded from the web might violate copyright regulations. Fran Arsenault promised to obtain guidance from the Town regarding this question.
- F. Any Other New Business -- None.

3. **Adjournment**

Committee members agreed to hold the next meeting on 22 December 2022 at 7pm. A motion to adjourn was made by Mike Geis and seconded by Joe Robb. Adjournment was approved by a unanimous roll call vote of the WRAC members in attendance, Joe Robb, Barry Rosen, Ron Parenti, and Mike Geis, at 9:15 PM.