

53 River St. Committee Meeting

Acton Recreation Department

50 Audubon Dr., Acton

August 1, 2018

Present: Entire committee is present, as well as Selby, Bettina and Brian Butler to speak to the ecology of the site, and various members of the public.

Called to Order 7pm

Citizens' Concerns: none mentioned.

Fun fact: The square in front of Exchange Hall is named after Howard Quimby, who died during WWI. A photo of a plaque and of Quimby was passed around.

Minutes of June 13, and July 18:

Clean-up of explanations and spelling on both. Change to July 18th minutes indicating Don was present. Minutes for both meetings were approved as amended unanimously.

Brian Butler of Oxbow Associates and Bettina Abe discussed the Natural Resources Division, the various responsibilities of this group. Bettina, Fran Portante, and Tom Tidman are the Conservation portion of the Division. They supervise the Land Stewardship Committee, the Acton Arboretum. Tom T. and the Recreation Department manage NARA park with its gardens. Bettina and Tom manage construction of kiosks, pollinator meadows, bio retention basins/rain gardens, boardwalks, wetlands restoration, hardscape, and trails. The presentation will be uploaded to DocuShare. Tom Tidman had suggestions for 53 River St., to manage as an ecology park. Bettina's presentation included pictures of NARA and the Arboretum, with examples of board walks, rock gardens, grape arbors. Annual maintenance involves clean up with volunteers, and Natural Resources staff under the Natural Resources budget. The team used pressure-treated pine for the boardwalks and compressed stone dust for the trails. They also do parking lot construction at NARA, the Arboretum and Ice House Pond, as well as all the conservation land parking areas. NR has contracted to install wells, at NARA, Morrison Farm and the Acton Arboretum. with CPA funding. . It was suggested that a well would be a great addition to 53 River Street. Alternatively, water can be siphoned from the brook to irrigate gardens at a future park. Will the Land Stewardship Committee take ownership of maintaining 53 River Street after a park were constructed?, Bettina said no, but suggested we could organize a "Friends of 53 River St." with volunteers. NARA is currently constructing a new sports pavilion with accessible bathrooms. Ice House Pond just got porous asphalt for a new parking area and a handicapped accessible trail. It is suggested that we consider how dogs could be included or limited on the 53 River Street parcel.

Brian Butler spoke about the potential of the 53 River Street property as a park, showing a current photo of the wetland. There was discussion of the *Galerucella beetle* that controls the purple loosestrife, an

invasive plant, on many conservation lands and local waterways, which seems to be a success. There was discussion of flood elevations, Fort Pond Brook's water quality, and of the dam as an architectural feature. If the Town removes the vegetation and bring backs the original look of the dam it would make a nice feature. There are bricks in the brook that could be from the original building, after the demolition from the fire.

Housing may bring more stormwater runoff, requiring more management. Mr. Butler recommended the dam be restructured, but smaller, but must be kept net neutral for downstream homes. He recommends that the vegetation upstream of the dam be maintained as a wet meadow and mowed annually, to prevent the land from succeeding to a red maple swamp.. Alternatively it could be flooded periodically to keep the vegetation in check. Question from public: an area along River St. has overgrown trees that have fallen. Would Brian recommend their removal? Brian said if they are on a steep slope they would be a liability. Brian said a board walk would be a great asset.

No further questions of Bettina and Brian

The committee will meet next on Aug 15 to continue discussion of historical aspects of the site. Barbara Donahue will present a discussion on the archaeological aspects. MACRIS website would be useful to look for ideas, and get questions for her discussion. Or the Mass Historical Society, as a resource, to look for this site.

Peter asked for other ideas for future discussions. Hydrology suggested. We are waiting on a quote from a hydrologist for a hydrologic and hydraulic assessment.

We need to get an application to the CPC and we need to decide what it will be for, before October. Is there a possibility to get a hydrologist to give their opinion on the dam? Report on the FEMA study of removed dams will be uploaded to DocuShare. Selby has a retired friend who oversaw a dam removal in Lancaster, and he could come to offer his opinions. Did Mr. Lazaro have previous topographical studies performed? He gave us the 21E, and the AutoCAD, but that was all.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20pm, after motion, second, and unanimous vote.

Next meeting August 15th

Respectfully submitted by Michele Holland