



WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

March 14, 2019

7:30 PM EDT

Acton Water District HQ, Conference Room
693 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA 01720

Present: Lucy Kirshner, Matthew Mostoller, Ron Beck, Barry Rosen, Joan Gardner (Board of Selectmen Liaison)

Absent: Robert Sekuler

Chairperson: Ron Beck

Clerk: Barry Rosen

1. Opening

Chair Beck opened the meeting at 7:40 PM. A quorum was present.

2. Regular Business

- A. Approval of Meeting Minutes – On a motion by Ms. Kirshner which was seconded by Mr. Beck, the minutes of the WRAC meeting of February 20, 2019 were approved by a unanimous vote.
- B. Citizen Comments: There were no citizen comments made. Mr. Beck again welcomed Mr. Santiago Rivero (A-B student) back to the meeting.
- C. Ms. Gardner Reporting on WRAC Membership: Ms. Gardner still does not understand why Mr. Kreuze is still listed as a member of the WRAC as the Selectmen did remove him from the committee so Ms. Kirshner was able to move from an associate to a full member of the committee. Ms. Gardner is going to speak with the Town Clerk (Eva) to better understand the problem and apparent confusion that developed. Mr. Frost (IT) was not able to remove Mr. Kreuze from the Town list.
- D. Discussion on “Actionable Items from the Saturday Water Workshop”: The WRAC went through the document that was provided to them prior to the meeting. Both committee members and guests were permitted to comment and provide recommendations during the meeting. Attendees provided considerable feedback on the document and on the process for deriving the final document. At the end of considerable discussion and comments, the committee felt that we had not arrived at a document that was ready to present to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Beck will create the next iteration of the document based upon the feedback received during the meeting. This next version will be deliberated during the next meeting of the WRAC. Some of the comments made follow:



- a. Mr. Beck stepped the committee through the changes to the “working document” that he had made based upon the feedback received. *[A copy of the current iteration of the document is attached to these minutes.]*
- b. Ms. Kirshner feels that a good moderator (like Sara Bursky, who worked with the WRAC during the Water Workshop) would be helpful to us particularly through some sections of the project.
- c. Combining Education with Enforcement or at least working some of these issues together was important in Mr. Rosen’s mind. He felt that with education of both the public and the involved staff, enforcement would be easier because the public would understand the need and the rules. Staff would understand the rules and why it was important to enforce them.
- d. Mr. Rosen commented that the Town should realize that even though the proposed project may not cost as much money as once thought, there will be a considerable time investment of both the volunteers and of some town staff which is also a monetary investment on the part of the town. Some of the town’s work may not get done with staff being diverted or the town may have to pay for additional work time and/or people to accomplish the work.
- e. There was some question about how and when the matrix should be used was raised by Ms. Kirshner.
- f. Mr. Mostoller suggested that we need to rank order the questions. It’s likely that we’ll need to get some of the questions answered prior to completing others. For example it was suggested to move question #3 to the #1 position. Perhaps we could rename “Future Water Demand” to something like “Acton’s Future.”
- g. After some discussion, the group suggested a “straw man to do” list order which would be discussed that might look like:
 - i. Outreach Education and Enforcement
 - ii. Acton’s Future
 - iii. Development of the Matrix
 - iv. Reporting and/or Next Steps
- h. Ms. Gardner stated that Education would work well as #1. It makes people aware.
- i. Ms. Amir-Lin cautioned that we should make sure that people understand the current content before we add more.
- j. The group discussed whether the current name (study) was appropriate or if we might look for a more suitable description of the task. It appeared that calling the project a “Roadmap” made sense to the committee.
- k. Mr. Rivero provided feedback:



- i. We should provide reasons why we do things.
- ii. What is the penalty for doing something? Why?
- iii. We will get more back from our investments by having people obey laws.

3. New/Special Business

- A. Chairperson Beck asked Mr. Rivero if he would be willing to accept a “homework” assignment from the committee. Mr. Beck asked if he would come back to the WRAC with some ideas of some methods/ideas that the WRAC could use to accomplish better outreach to the community. Mr. Rivero said that he would think about it and put the question to his friends at school.
- B. Meeting Date: The next scheduled meeting of the Water Resources Advisory Committee will be held on Wednesday, April 10, 2019 in the conference room at the Acton Water District Headquarters (693 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA 01720) beginning at 7:00 PM EDT.

4. Adjournment

On a motion to adjourn by Mr. Rosen and seconded by Mr. Mostoller, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 PM by a unanimous vote.

The document version which was discussed by the participants in this meeting of the WRAC is attached to the minutes.



Acton Water Study Scope Areas Suggested by outcomes of September Water Seminar

SUMMARY

WRAC has spent the past 75 days analyzing and turning the Water Workshop outcome into actionable focus areas for the proposed Acton Water Workshop.

WRAC wanted to answer the following questions for Acton BOS:

- (1) Is there a real need, both in scope and timing (do we need it, do we need it now) for conducting an Acton long range water study?
- (2) What do the workshop breakout “report-outs” inform us as to the scope of a study that will add real value in answering the most important long-term planning uncertainties and policy decision making needs?
- (3) Which information and analysis needs should be referred to other committees or boards and which ones should be the focus on a WRAC-led water study?

COMMITTEE APPROACH

The methodology we employed was to (a) enumerate all of the questions that were reported out of the water workshop breakout groups; (b) divide the questions into several main types and assign pairs of committee members to discuss and synthesize each set of questions; (c) turn the questions into actionable recommendations for further study; (d) discuss as a committee what we would like to recommend to the BOS as next steps.

It was the consensus of the committee, that the high level water workshop finding is that there ARE important questions that policy makers seek answers to in making decisions impacting town water resources. We strongly recommend to the Board of Selectmen that a concerted effort to address these needs be conducted. This could be through policy review, studies, working groups, and the use of consultants. In addition to WRAC, other stakeholders need to be included in this process including Town committees/staff, the Acton Water District, and local/regional organizations.

HIGH LEVEL QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED BY THE WATER STUDY:

1. OUR WATER FUTURE: What is the availability, need, and growth in demand, alternatives, risks and costs for potable water going forward?
2. WATER RESOURCE IMPACTS: How do activities in Acton and surrounding Towns impact our water resources including management decisions, development patterns, climate impacts, and source protection tools?
3. ENFORCEMENT: How can the Town improve the governance structure to make enforcement of town Bylaws and Regulations more effective, proactive, and achieve the intent of that rule making? Is the public aware of the need for strong and consistent enforcement action to benefit the greater good and reduce risks and costs?
4. PUBLIC EDUCATION and COMMUNICATION: What is the best strategy for achieving effective, ongoing public education so that the public become informed participants in the decision process? How can communications between stakeholders be more effective and streamlined?



FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION ITEMS FROM ACTON WATER RESOURCES WORKSHOP

What follows directly tie back to the questions that arose from the September Water Workshop. (The specific question for each recommendation is not listed in this summary document, but are available as backup.) It should be noted that some of these questions may be readily answered or have answers that may seem obvious, but not all participants raising the questions were paired with participants that were suited to answer such questions.

1. POLICY DECISION FRAMEWORK

A wide range of policy-related questions from the workshop suggests the need to focus the study on development of a decision-making/consequences matrix. The decision matrix would provide a framework for town staff, policy making entities, (BOS, FinCom, AWD, ConCom, 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 box, 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.

2. PUBLIC EDUCATION

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 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?

3. DATA DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

Future supply, protection and waste treatment needs are all dependent on projections of future population growth, land use decisions, and economic factors. The Workshop raised many questions about what project impacts are in terms of water resource impacts and how to determine those impacts in a consistent and repeatable way. This would help to resolve growth scenarios into a range of likely out-



comes. Reviewing the enforcement of existing rules, regulations, bylaws and permit conditions could help to better understand impacts in light of the questions raised during this process.

Areas related to science and data came up regularly throughout the discussions during the water workshop. This overlaps with the areas of policy, forecasting, permitting, education, and enforcement. Specific data that was discussed or questioned for the decision making process may largely exist, however its availability or current use in existing decision making processes may not be well understood. Organizing and understanding what data is available and how it may be used is a first step. Areas of perceived, real, or possibly out of date data gaps, may benefit from site/situation specific data generation and review versus broader initiatives that rely heavily on assumptions. Another data issue had a common theme related to GIS and analyzing land use, zoning, wastewater management, storm water management, and groundwater protection. Finally, some of the science issues relate to contaminants, regulations, treatment of water resources, and understanding the relationships of managing water resources and land use throughout the community and neighboring Towns. Developing a matrix of interests, concerns, and responsibilities across various stakeholders could drive better use and generation of data, scientific knowledge, and engineering principles.

4. WATER RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

Another key set of workshop questions exposed considerable differences in ways of thinking about future water resource constraints (or lack thereof). An important element of actions taken in response to these recommendations (including any potential water study) should be a way for policy makers to understand future supply, factors that could impinge on future supply, and how to understand the costs and benefits of safeguarding future supply. This should include regulatory considerations, environmental constraints, pollutant risks, and infrastructure needs. It should also evaluate constraints and opportunities related to wastewater management needs. Finally surface water and storm water constraints should be identified as they relate to pollutant loading, capacity for the system to handle (natural or manmade), and the pros and cons of recharge. Risk-minimization actions or policies should be identified and developed.

5. PUBLIC REPORTING

Many of the water workshop questions lead to the need for 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.