



## WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

May 23, 2019

7:00 PM

Acton Water District Conference Room

693 Massachusetts Avenue

Acton, MA 01720

**Present:** Ron Beck, Lucy Kirshner, Robert Sekuler, Barry Rosen, Joan Gardner (BoS Liason).

**Absent:** Matthew Mostoller

**Chairperson:** Ron Beck

**Clerk:** Barry Rosen

### 1. Opening

Chair Beck opened the meeting at 7:00 PM. A quorum was present along with 3 guests. Mr. Rosen continued as clerk due to an absence.

### 2. Regular Business

- A. Approval of Meeting Minutes – The minutes of the WRAC meeting held on May 8, 2019 were reviewed. On a motion to approve the minutes made by Ms. Kirshner and seconded by Mr. Sekuler, the minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.
- B. Citizens' Comments/Remarks –Ms. Kastens provided some updates to the committee on the dispute between Concord and Littleton/Acton over the proposed Nagog Pond Water Treatment plant. Ms. Kastens also announced that Ben Wetherill has been named as the new Chief Scientist of OARS.
- C. WRAC Membership –
  - a. A question was asked about the status of the A-B student that had been working with the committee. Mr. Rosen responded that he had been sending our agenda and minutes to Mr. Rivero. He had also written to Mr. Rivero asking if there was continued interest in working with the WRAC. Mr. Rosen, to date, has not received any response back to his message. The committee's comments were that perhaps the class project was over, exams were coming-up and there were other things to do. We should think about recruiting A-B help in the future to help with the water study.
  - b. Mr. Sekuler mentioned that he knows someone that might be interested in WRAC membership. He explained the person's qualifications and the committee expressed interest in Mr. Sekuler speaking further with his contact.
  - c. Ms. Kiely is also exploring WRAC membership. She has submitted her information to the VCC and is scheduled to meet with them.



- d. Mr. Parenti (former AWD Commissioner) was present at tonight's meeting. He is interested in learning more about the WRAC's business and possible membership.

**D. Document Discussion and Preparation for BoS Presentation –**

- a. Mr. Beck and Mr. Mostoller combined their work into the document that was presented to this evening's meeting. A copy of the "work in progress" document is attached to the minutes of this meeting.
- b. The committee and the guests present examined and discussed the entire document and made suggestions and requested edits to the draft "ACTON WATER 2050."
- c. There was substantial discussion of the \$50,000.00 request for funding that would be presented to the Board of Selectmen. Was this the correct amount? Was it too much money? Will other organizations/boards/committees have a problem with that amount being requested? It was explained that the money was for consulting and that in the scheme of things, this was not very much money to pay for consulting.
- d. Mr. Parenti said that we need a consultant that would be able to help us project scenarios well into the future – one that has had experience doing that sort of work before. He told us that as one goes further into the future, predictions get more difficult. Mr. Parenti was not certain how much the AWD paid a consultant for its latest 5-year plan but he volunteered to obtain that information for the committee.
- e. There were enough changes to the document to warrant a new version which Mr. Beck volunteered to do after the meeting. He would try to get it done soon but if this evening's attendees did not receive it over the weekend, people should send any additional suggestions directly to Mr. Beck. *Note: Do not copy or discuss any suggestions with the distribution outside of a WRAC meeting.*

**3. New/Special Business**

- A. Next WRAC Meeting – The committee felt that another meeting of the WRAC should take place to review the next iteration of the document prior to the presentation to the Board of Selectmen where the committee has been allocated 20 minutes. The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, May 29, 2019 @ 7:00 PM at the Acton Water District Headquarters, 693 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA 01720. *[Clerk's Note: This meeting will need to be rescheduled to a later date.]*

**4. Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Sekuler and seconded by Ms. Kirshner, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm by a unanimous vote.



## ACTON WATER 2050

### Acton Water Policy Plan Scope Areas Suggested by outcomes of September Water Workshop

05-23-19 V5

#### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Water resources encompasses surface and groundwater quality, drinking water supply and protection, waste and storm water minimization and treatment, and wetlands protection.

It was the consensus of the committee, confirming clear water workshop findings, that there are important questions that policy makers and others seek answers to in making decisions impacting town water resources and the answers are not readily accessible today. (In many cases the foundational data exists but is not readily available in actionable format.)

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 during 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. We intend to maximize use of existing information, but to do so effective execution 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. *We anticipate requesting commitment of a reasonable number of town staff manhours on an ongoing basis, to be decided by the Town Manager*)
- modest town budget resource, including for an outside resource for facilitation of public meetings (*We anticipate requesting \$50,000 in outside assistance for the first year*)
- creativity in how to reach people for participation and education (*We may be able to recruit an ABHS volunteer to assist with social media outreach and related ideas.*)
- ongoing support from BOS.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED WATER2050 TASKS FOR 2019-2020

The key Water Workshop outcomes, that WRAC believe are actionable focus areas for Acton Water 2050 are as follows and will be undertaken sequentially:

- A. Education, outreach, and enforcement. A driving element will be outreach to the Town and its various stakeholders, together with education and enforcement, and will be continued throughout. A first step will be one-on-one interviews with stakeholders, which will



surface a lot of information, ideas, and resources. 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, as well as wastewater and wastewater management alternatives. This is closely linked to enforcement. Good enforcement of protection bylaws and rules already on the books, will only happen with an educated public. A key deliverable will be an ongoing education plan.

- B. Common Vision for Acton's Future. There is not a consensus today as to the level of risk and uncertainty regarding future water resources 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, and identify other constraints. 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.

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, and maximum growth) and understand the range of future demand that should form the basis for future land use decisions and water planning initiatives. Demand scenarios and their explanation and basis will be a key deliverable of the study.

- C. 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 resources carrying capacity (waste and storm water management). Water 2050 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, 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 generally include activity subject to policy and permit review. 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 cell in each matrix, then, would provide guidance for the user to develop an understanding about the interplay between the activity type and the impact type. The matrix would contain, for each cell, a roadmap for decision making 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. The BOS and town boards and committees could think of the matrix as a kind of “Cliff notes” as to how to think about the impact of town decision and policies on water.

- D. 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.

The work here will be to recommend on which metrics will be most useful to track and report on to understand the progress of the town towards a sustainable water resource. 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.

### 3. TIMELINE

The proposed timeline is as follows:

DATE	ACTIVITY
6-17-2019	Review of this proposal at Board of Selectmen’s Meeting
Nov 2019	Conduct outreach, “Water 101” Session, and stakeholder interviews
Dec 2019 and Jan 2020	Complete stakeholder interviews, Begin work on Acton’s Future Section
Prior to spring 2020 ATM	Report back to BOS
July 2020	Begin to develop Matrix
Sept 2020	Work on reporting and next steps
Dec 31, 2020	Wrap up and final deliverables of first phase.



## **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".