



WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
December 13, 2023
7:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

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

Chairperson: Joe Robb

Clerk: Ron Parenti

Others in Attendance: Alissa Nicol (Select Board Liaison) and Terra Friedrichs

1. Opening

WRAC chair Joe Robb opened the meeting at 7:05 PM.

2. Regular Business

- A. Public Remarks/Comments – Kim Kastens notified the Committee that she would not be able to attend due to a conflict, but Ron Parenti read a statement that she had prepared relating to recent conductivity measurements made by Green Acton and OARS. In response to a question raised at a previous meeting about comparisons between summer and winter conductivity readings, Kastens reported that relevant measurements had been made at River Meadow Brook downstream from major roads. Contrary to expectations the conductivity measurements were found to be higher in the summer than in the winter, when salt is applied to roads to control ice. However, Kastens noted that this result is likely due to the elevated water level and flow rate in River Meadow Brook during the winter months, which would introduce a significant dilution factor.
- B. Review Minutes from 2 November 2023 – A motion to approve the minutes for 2 November was made by Matt Mostoller and seconded by Mike Geis. Geis noted one typo in the minutes, and the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes with that correction.
- C. Review Minutes from 15 November 2023 – A motion to approve the minutes for 15 November was made by Matt Mostoller and seconded by Mike Geis. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes.
- D. Discussion of Zoning Report Mailing – The Zoning Report authored by Joe Robb and Barry Rosen was mailed to Town residents and businesses in late November. Matt Mostoller confirmed that the Acton Water District had paid for the postage and the Town paid to print the 4-page document, which represented a roughly 50-50 division of the total distribution cost. Mostoller also noted that the Water District has about 300 copies of the report that will be made available at future outreach events, and he stated that he has received a number of very complimentary comments about the report. A link to the document will be included in the Water District’s website, and Mostoller recommended that the Committee request that the Town include links on several committee websites



including those for WRAC, Zoning, and the Health Department. Ron Parenti suggested that the Committee submit a version of the report for publication in the Acton Exchange, which is a new local on-line newspaper. The inclusion of a summary in Acton's Municipal Monthly, which covers a wide range of recent Town events, was suggested by Joe Robb.

E. Discussion of WRAC Assignments in the 5-Year Action Plan Goals Document – The Town's Open Space Committee recently published a draft 5-year action plan document, which includes 4 tasks that have been assigned to the WRAC. At the beginning of the discussion of this topic Joe Robb noted that Terra Friedrichs had sent an email to the Committee in which she emphasized that the WRAC is not obligated to perform these tasks since it does not report to the Open Space Committee. Robb stated that the WRAC is aware that its work is directed by the Town Manager and the Select Board, but that a discussion of the tasks suggested by the Open Space Committee is appropriate. The four recommended assignments are:

1. Work with surrounding towns for a regional approach to water protection
2. Focus education efforts toward property owners who abut critical water supplies
3. Continue to review and update models used for groundwater protection zones
4. Identify partnerships that can help leverage resources to protect land and water supply

With regard to the first task, Mostoller was asked if regional water protection had been discussed during the meetings with neighboring towns about a potential connection to MWRA. He replied that those conversations had taken place, and that Boxborough has a water resources committee that WRAC members could speak to on this topic. Several Committee members objected to the wording of the third task, since the group does not have the resources to review groundwater models. After some discussion, it was agreed that the Committee would recommend that this task statement should be modified as follows: "Facilitate the review and update of models used for groundwater protection zones". Task #2 was discussed but no wording changes were recommended. It was agreed that this task would be a natural outgrowth of the work performed on the zoning report, and that abutters to protection zones could be found with the help of the Town's GIS information. Mostoller asked if the Committee should consider the inclusion of additional tasks, and recommended a fifth task defined as follows: "Ensure that development and maintenance plans for new recreational facilities are in alignment with the goal of groundwater protection". Alissa Nicol voiced her support for this suggestion, and WRAC members agreed to include this task in their response to the Open Space and Recreation Plan committee.

F. Preparation for Select Board Discussion of Future WRAC Tasks – At a prior WRAC meeting, Nicol had informed the members that the Select Board is planning to discuss future WRAC task assignments at an upcoming meeting. To prepare for that discussion, Joe Robb prepared a draft document that includes a list of 20 task suggestions that cover the following study topics:

1. Surface water



2. Groundwater/Water Supply
3. Stormwater Management
4. Wastewater Management

In addition to this list, there was a brief discussion of the WRAC's potential involvement in future revisions of the Town's MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) and NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) regulations. Since the Committee did not have an opportunity to review Robb's list prior to this meeting, members agreed to postpone a review of the included tasks until the next WRAC meeting. The Committee also decided to post a joint meeting with the Select Board on 18 December in the event that the Board's agenda for that date would include a discussion of future WRAC tasks.

G. Any Other New Business - Parenti noted that he had attended the Concord water resources discussion on 5 December, and had heard a recommendation to expand their sewer capability by disposing wastewater on the Grace property in Acton near the school bus terminal that Concord installed several years ago. During this discussion there was no mention of the potential impact on the Assabet wells operated by the Acton Water District. Matt Mostoller stated that Concord had expressed an interest in using this location for wastewater disposal prior to the construction of the bus terminal, and WRAC members agreed that any future discussions about the use of the Grace property for wastewater disposal would need to be carefully monitored. These remarks led to another discussion about Concord's control of Nagog Pond. Joe Robb displayed a map showing that Concord owns a significant amount of land surrounding the pond, which can be used by Concord for future treatment facilities. It was noted that the Town of Acton currently owns none of the shoreline surrounding the Pond.

3. Adjournment

Committee members agreed to hold the next meeting on 18 January 2024 at 7pm. A motion to adjourn was made by Ron Parenti and seconded by Matt Mostoller. Adjournment was approved at 8:45 pm by a unanimous roll call vote.