



WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
February 29, 2024
7:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

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

Chairperson: Joe Robb

Clerk: Ron Parenti

Others in Attendance: Alissa Nicol (Select Board Liaison), David Boccuti, and Kim Kastens

1. Opening

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

2. Regular Business

- A. Public Remarks/Comments – Matt Mostoller informed the Committee that the EPA is currently collecting comments from stakeholder for the latest W.R. Grace site 5-year review and that the Acton Water District will be submitting comments. Kim Kastens indicated that Green Acton would also be submitting comments. David Boccuti inquired about the recent HazMat application for the solar farm on Knox Trail and asked if WRAC intended to comment on that application. In response, Mostoller stated that the Water District has provided input. Barry Rosen noted that the District has requested that the contractor use a fire suppressant that does not contain PFAS in the lithium battery enclosures.
- B. Review Minutes from 1 February 2024 – A motion to approve the minutes for 1 February 2024 was made by Barry Rosen and seconded by Matt Mostoller. The four members in attendance, Matt Mostoller, Barry Rosen, Ron Parenti, and Joe Robb, voted unanimously to approve the minutes.
- C. Discussion of Response to Select Board's Suggestions for Future WRAC Tasks – Ron Parenti initiated the discussion by reviewing the recommendations given by the Select Board during the Board's meeting on 5 February; Parenti and Geis represented the WRAC at that meeting. Starting with a list of 20 possible future tasks compiled by Joe Robb in January, at the WRAC meeting on 1 February Committee members generated a shorter list of 5 suggest tasks that was presented to the Select Board. Following a discussion of the short list, the Board recommended that the WRAC focus on the following three tasks
 1. Provide guidance to the Select Board on the formation of a stormwater utility.
 2. Provide guidance to the Select Board on the formation of wastewater districts.
 3. Study the impact of efforts to spur commercial development on water demand.

Additionally, Alissa Nicol and two other Board members encouraged the WRAC to investigate ways to reduce the impact of road salt on water quality. Nicol commented



that the Select Board has also asked the Board of Health to speak with the Water District and the Public Works Department about the road salt issue. Mostoller noted that he and Alexandra Wahlstrom had a meeting with the Board of Health in 2023 to discuss the impacts of the new PFAS regulations and road salt on the Town's water supply.

In view of the input from the Select Board, Committee members discussed the tradeoff between addressing the recommended tasks sequentially or in parallel, and also discussed the nature of the deliverables for those investigations. The members decided that it would be best to focus their efforts on the stormwater question, and begin by collecting information on existing stormwater utilities in neighboring towns. It was noted that Westford has established a utility, which could serve as a model for Acton. Kim Kastens informed the Committee that funding for a stormwater utility study is on the warrant for Concord's upcoming Town Meeting. Mostoller expressed the opinion that a lot of work has been done on this problem in the last decade, and that the Committee should begin its investigation by collecting information from past projects. He also suggested that one of the first questions to address is the rationale for establishing a wastewater utility and how this utility would fit into the Town's existing governance structure. Joe Robb recommended that the Committee create a directory on DocuShare to collect relevant information, and that the members review this information prior to the next meeting and develop an outline for a future presentation to the Select Board. Ron Parenti volunteered to create a DocuShare directory and upload documents submitted by members.

The subject of sump pump permits and allowed discharge methods was briefly discussed, and it was noted that most homeowners are unaware that discharge to the street is not permitted. Parenti recommended a review of the sump pump discharge restriction, since he has neighbors who must use their pumps frequently to avoid basement flooding. Nicol suggested that Corey York was probably the person on Town staff to contact if the Committee had questions about this topic, and that the Town Manager should be copied on any email sent to the staff.

- D. WRAC Membership Discussion – Joe Robb reminded the Committee that the WRAC is permitted to have six members and two associate members, and that the Committee currently only has five full members and no associate members. He also noted that David Boccuti is a frequent attendee, and asked Boccuti if he would like to become a WRAC member. Boccuti agreed to join the Committee as an associate member, and indicated that he would submit an application for that position to the Town's Volunteer Coordinating Committee and take the required on-line training to satisfy the Open Meeting and Conflict of Interest regulations.
- E. Overview of Water District Financial Trends – Ron Parenti provided a summary of material that the Water District Finance Committee will be presenting to the voters at the Water District's Annual Meeting in March. The charts shown detailed the long-term financial impacts of the water treatment required to satisfy the EPA and MassDEP drinking water regulations. The Water District has already spent approximately \$38 million to build the North Acton, South Acton, and Acton Center treatment plants, and anticipates that it will need to spend an additional \$17 million to retrofit those facilities



for PFAS remediation. The annual debt service costs for the bonds taken to fund these projects is now approximately \$2.5 million, and the Water District Commissioners have recently voted to increase the water use rates by 50% to provide the needed revenue. Since fixed fees represent a large fraction of the water bill for most customers, it is estimated that this rate structure change will result in a cost increase of about 17% for residential customers. Kim Kastens asked for an estimate of the money that might be recovered from the EPA, MassDEP, or the ongoing lawsuits against the producers of PFAS products. Mostoller and Rosen both replied that the District expected to receive very little financial help from these sources. Kastens also questioned the need for a 50% increase in water rates and suggested that an increase closer to 30% should provide sufficient revenue for FY25. Mostoller and Rosen explained that the new rate structure was based on very conservative assumptions, and included the fact that the annual cost of media replacement for PFAS treatment is currently unknown. Nicol suggested that when this presentation is made at the Annual Meeting the billing increase be given as a dollar value rather than a percentage.

F. Any Other New Business – None

3. **Adjournment**

Committee members agreed to hold the next meeting on 28 March 2024 at 7pm. A motion to adjourn was subsequently made by Barry Rosen and seconded by Matt Mostoller. The four members in attendance, Matt Mostoller, Barry Rosen, Ron Parenti, and Joe Robb, all voted to approve the motion at 8:35 pm.

Meeting Chat File

19:25:08 From Joe Robb to Host and Panelists:

<https://westfordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/9423/Stormwater-Management-Utility-Fee-and-Credit-Policy-Amended-10152019>

19:29:02 From Kim Kastens to Host and Panelists:

Concord's Integrated Water Resources Public Forum web page, includes a link to the video recording. Event was 5dec2024. <https://concordma.gov/3483/Water-Resource-Planning>

19:30:29 From Kim Kastens to Host and Panelists:

Concord Town Meeting Warrant. Article 16 is Create Stormwater Enterprise Fund. <https://concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/46837/2024-Annual-Town-Meeting-Warrant---V2?bidId=>

19:45:37 From Joe Robb to Host and Panelists:

<https://www.acton-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5488/20220630-Town-of-Acton---SWMP?bidId=>

19:53:16 From Joe Robb to Host and Panelists:

Here is a link to information on Acton's MS4 <https://www.epa.gov/npdes-permits/regulated-ms4-massachusetts-communities>

19:56:29 From Kim Kastens to Host and Panelists:



<https://www3.epa.gov/region1/npdes/stormwater/ma/tms4noi/acton-auth.pdf>

This authorization to discharge expires at midnight on June 30, 2022.

19:57:03 From Kim Kastens to Host and Panelists:

<https://www.epa.gov/npdes-permits/regulated-ms4-massachusetts-communities>