



WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

July 24, 2024

7:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

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

Chairperson: Joe Robb

Clerk: Ron Parenti

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

1. Opening

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

2. Regular Business

- A. Public Remarks/Comments – None
- B. Review Minutes from 2 July 2024 – A motion to approve the minutes for 2 July 2024 was made by Barry Rosen and seconded by Mike Geis. Barry Rosen, Ron Parenti, Mike Geis, and Joe Robb voted to approve the minutes; Matt Mostoller abstained because he was unable to attend that meeting.
- C. Review of Draft WRAC Stormwater Presentation to the Select Board – Following the direction provided by Committee members at the previous meeting, Barry Rosen and Joe Robb prepared a presentation consisting of 8 charts that outlined a roadmap to revise the Town's approach to renovating and maintaining its stormwater infrastructure. The presentation flow is outlined below.

Slide 1 – Introduction

Slide 2 – Presentation Agenda

Slide 3 – Review of the DPW 6/24 Presentation on Acton Stormwater Asset Management Plan

Slide 4 – Reasons to Fund Stormwater Protection

Slide 5 – Stormwater Management in Other MA Towns

Slide 6 – Acton's Stormwater Management and Funding Options (1)

Slide 7 – Acton's Stormwater Management and Funding Options (2)

Slide 8 – WRAC Recommendations to the Select Board

Dave Boccuti initiated the discussion of the draft presentation with several suggestions for wording modifications. Ron Parenti asked about the method used to compute the cost of the stormwater system, which is given as \$275M on chart 3; Robb indicated that this number was included in the Woodard & Curran Stormwater Drainage System Asset Management Plan, but that the method to make the calculation was unclear. After some discussion, Committee members agreed that the cost number should be described as the



estimated system replacement cost computed by Woodard & Curran. It was noted that this number provides a valuable reference point for estimating the annual maintenance cost, and that 1% of the system replacement cost might represent a reasonable estimate of the money that should be allocated for annual maintenance.

Chart 4 includes two pictures of stormwater culverts in Acton, but the possibility of replacing this artwork with examples of property damage due to a failed culvert was discussed. Mostoller offered to search the Water District files for a suitable image, and Rosen indicated that he would ask if the DPW had pictures of stormwater damage. Parenti promised to send the members a presentation given in Concord that included several examples of street flooding due to stormwater runoff in that town.

Mike Geis asked Committee members to revisit the cost estimates included in Chart 3 of the presentation, which included annual maintenance cost estimates generated by Woodard & Curran that were in the range of \$1M. Geis showed a plot that he had generated, which includes the estimated property owner fee for stormwater maintenance in towns that have established a stormwater utility. The plot appears to show a linear trend between the average fee assessed to each household and the town's population density. This chart suggests that Acton residents might be asked to pay an annual fee of about \$60 per household to support a stormwater utility. After some discussion, Committee members agreed that Geis' chart provided useful information about the fees that Acton residents would be asked to pay, and Robb agreed to consider including this analysis in the Committee's presentation. It was noted that the data points for the towns of Fall River and Dedham were outliers in that the fees for stormwater infrastructure maintenance were well above the linear trendline. Rosen provided information that linked these high costs to the need to remediate phosphorus discharges into nearby bodies of water, which is not a problem that Acton is likely to encounter.

The Committee then turned its attention to a discussion of Charts 6 and 7, which summarize the Town's stormwater management options and potential funding sources. The options considered range from minor modifications of the current management approach using money obtained through an increase in property taxes, to the institution of a new stormwater utility and an enterprise fund that would be supported by annual fees charged to each business and homeowner. The latter approach could be administered in a manner similar to that used to manage the Town's existing sewer system. A number of towns in Massachusetts have instituted stormwater utilities, and it is common to encourage the use of permeable paving materials through the use of stormwater fee abatements. It was noted that the conversion to a stormwater utility typically takes several years.

Slide 8 summarizes the Committee's recommendations to the Select Board, and Alissa Nicol advised that the wording of the chart emphasize that the included bullet points represent action items to be completed by the Town, with the assistance of the WRAC. She also suggested that WRAC should be prepared to answer questions relating to the monetary cost of damage in recent years due to failures of the aging stormwater infrastructure. The list of recommendations presented in Slide 8 include funding for a



stormwater utility feasibility study, an annual maintenance cost estimate to be performed by WRAC members and the DPW, and an educational outreach to inform the public of the need to revise the Town's approach to infrastructure improvements and maintenance. Since a number of towns in Massachusetts have already enlisted the services of consultants to perform stormwater feasibility studies, it was suggested that Acton's cost for this analysis would be minimized by retaining a consultant with prior experience in this area. Rosen suggested that the WRAC, with the help of Town staff, should investigate the availability of grant money to fund this effort.

Committee members agreed that the charts assembled by Rosen and Robb were concise and well structured. The presentation to the Select Board is tentatively scheduled for 23 September and the Committee will request a 20-minute time slot. The talk will be given by Joe Robb, and at least one other Committee member will be present at the Select Board meeting to assist. Corey York and QinRui Pang will be provided copies of the final slides in advance of the meeting.

D. Any Other New Business – None

3. Adjournment

Committee members agreed to hold their next meeting on 15 August 2024 at 7pm to perform a second review of WRAC's stormwater presentation to the Select Board. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Barry Rosen and seconded by Matt Mostoller. This motion was approved by a unanimous vote of the Committee members at 8:35 pm.

Meeting Chat File

19:52:09 From Matthew Mostoller to Everyone:

Additional information on the issues and requirements in the Charles River basin.

<https://www.epa.gov/charlesriver/environmental-challenges-charles-river>

20:32:50 From Kim Kastens to Host and panelists:

<https://concordma.gov/3483/Water-Resource-Planning>

20:33:44 From Kim Kastens to Host and panelists:

website above includes the video of the Concord public meeting about stormwater, wastewater and drinking water