

**53 River Street Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Acton Recreation Department**  
**July 18, 2018**  
**7:00 PM**

**Committee Members present:** Peter Berry, Bill Klauer, Cami Duquet, Bob Whittlesey, Bill Alesbury (remote participation), Pete Hocknell, Michele Holland, Lou York, Don Boyle and John Cook.

Staff present: Selby, Bettina Abe, Corrine Losch (intern)

Public present: Amber Klauer, Kathryn Acerbo-Bachman, Todd Bachman, Rob Hamilton, David Honn, Robert Todd, Beth Macaulay, Eric Ranvig

Committee Chairman, Peter Berry called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Remote participation per Open meeting Law is acceptable with quorum, a chairman, and voting by roll call. Bill Alesbury is participating remotely, and all votes are by roll call.

**Citizen's concerns,** none were raised at this time

Peter went to BoS and to increase membership to 10 from 7 full members. At the next BoS meeting on August 6, Cami and Peter Hocknell will be appointed as full members.

Peter shared a thumbnail in history point. Carol Spinney (Big Bird from Sesame Street) was from Acton and bought his first puppet, a monkey, at the South Acton Church rummage sale. Amber Klauer still runs the rummage sale.

**Minutes:** May 30 and June 20 minutes were unanimously approved with changes. June 13 minutes were tabled for the next meeting.

**Review of Conway School plans.** Copies were distributed to committee and guests. The packets contain a lot of background. Some inaccuracies in the history were noted. Acton was incorporated in 1735 at meeting house hill Acton town center, 1635 was when as a part of Concord, Acton was included and incorporated. Must make sure the plaque on site reflects correct history.

Selby stated that project goals may have been shifted from original, they did not want to incorporate the housing part, stating the site is unsuitable, and included a great deal of detail against housing and for park concept.

The Watershed page discussed the dam. They mentioned that this dam was not built as a flood control dam, but to power the mill, and as such it is not functioning. Both sections of the dam, the stone and the concrete qualify as historic.

Question: are we discussing this as a school project or a preliminary concept? They did not meet the contract as voted upon. Selby stated these drawings are concepts, not a proposal but an aid to visualize what the site could be. Lots of public interest has been generated.

Bettina stated that there is a meeting planned with a hydrologist for a variety of items, not particularly this one site.

Slopes and drainage, regulations, and flood plain information were reviewed. They did not include that this site is in the historic district.

Pg. 11 the flood plain includes a small bump out onto River Street, but that is correct according to FEMA. It is a lower area. The steeper slopes are on the MBTA side pushing water to the road and the site.

The students reported on the community engagement, and survey results. Selby posted all public comments on DocuShare, and included the video of their presentation to their faculty advisors to DocuShare. Kathryn Acerbo-Bachmann said that the last posted minutes in DocuShare will download. Selby will look into it.

According to Bill Klauer, the town may have to offer the building to other town departments for reuse before the BoS can declare it surplus. Is it structurally sound? Lazarro was using it for storing trucks. The roof leaks. It is about 4000 SF. Bill K. stated it is on the MACRIS list of historic sites. It may be some use, such as storage for recreation department. According to the neighbors, the building is surrounded by water during floods. This is an issue if we build a park also.

The hydrology study is the next step. Selby, Bettina and Tom Tidman met with Bruce Nichelsen from OTO to discuss the study.

**Final Park Design:** Making River St. one-way to east and the construction of a sidewalk is an assumption in this report. Are the affordable housing option and park mutually exclusive? Pg 19 stated it includes both historic and public park, but can you have affordable housing despite their recommendations.

**More Park Design Details.** Quaking aspens were recommended. The pavilion is shown to have a dock-like structure, a bio-retention basin and where the race way is located, which would be filled in. The plan includes a rest room and parking lot of 15 spaces. This proposal presumes the existing building be taken down. The plan includes a rough outline of the costs to construct the park.

**More comments about the 3 proposed designs.** David Honn said it was ok as an exercise, but to remember the schemes are naïve, they are students, and they shied away from the housing due to their lack of knowledge of housing. They left out the neighborhood interests and looked at the site in a vacuum.

Peter asked Cory York for traffic counts in area and he is waiting on stats. Selby stated he understands that there has not been a traffic study. Is it for this committee to recommend that River St be one-way? Peter says yes, so as to accommodate the bike lane. Appreciation from public was expressed for including their concerns. Town Meeting will make the final decision. The Committee will file a report with the BoS on our progress in one year. CPC funding this year is not realistic given the timing.

**Archeology.** The PAL cultural resource assessment proposal was distributed and discussed; Town Manager Mangiaratti can get funding. Selby spoke to PAL. When Pine Hawks site was started, a larger study was done for all of Acton, which is posted on DocuShare. PAL said 53 River was low probability for pre-contact archaeological artifacts and recommended a cultural resource assessment as a first step. Public Archeology Lab people can get the study done in one week. This like a phase one site assessment environmental study. It would be desktop work with a site visit. Cost is \$5,600.

Barbara Donahue will be presenting a full archeologic survey options and suggestions on our August 15<sup>th</sup>. She worked on a Pepperell mill site. Bill Klauer opined that PAL would be writing a report on the history that we already know. The Historical Commission is in charge of this sort of thing. Can we ask the Historic Commission to look at this site? Bill K. said yes. This property is listed on the state's MACRIS database. We need a full inventory before redevelopment. The committee should not go forward with CPC funding until an inventory of the property is done. The Historical Commission can do this for nothing. PAL proposal is not time sensitive, and possible that DER may fund this work. Motion to table the PAL, seconded, and we do not recommend funding at this time. Further discussion? Ask PAL for a similar study to compare and think about. Is it a prerequisite that to get CPC funding we need this sort of study prior to granting us funds? Peter does not think so, but it is probably a good idea to have some study. Bettina will get PALs examples and from Barbara's work on

Pepperell site to compare. Comment from public. To qualify for state funding, an archaeological study would be required. Study needs to be done to Secretary of Interior standards. We should make a list of questions to ask Barbara on August 15. There was a unanimous roll call vote to table decision on PAL study.

**Other studies needed.** The list of other studies mentioned at the June 20 meeting was reviewed. The hydrology study must be done to get an understanding of the dam and potential dam breach/removal. The Tighe & Bond proposal on Docushare included wetland delineation, full survey, hydrology study, and redevelopment concepts.

Members of the committee previously mentioned wanting the lot lines staked. The survey data in CAD, given to the Town by Stamksi and McNary, cannot be used for construction.

Question: is this small dam in the State's jurisdiction under the Office of Dam Safety? The State does not have this dam on their register. The Office of Dam Safety will send an engineer out assess this dam to determine whether it falls under their jurisdiction. This state process is underway now. We will get quotes on a hydrology study.

Peter B. will compile a list of what exactly we need and where we can get the funding.

The boardwalk is central to any park. The Committee should get some idea of what is needed to build a boardwalk on wetlands, like the arboretum bog board walk. We can get that info and use it.

Bettina asked how many members have read the Tighe & Bond proposal. Several raised their hands; Bettina recommended everyone re-read the proposal. The hydrology study should include upstream and downstream as well. Understanding the hydrology is a top priority, but how do we pay for it? The typical projects funded from professional services budget are smaller. \$13,500 was used for 348-364 Main Street site, for example. The Tighe & Bond proposal was closer to \$50,000, and would likely need to be funded by Community Preservation Act funds.

Is there any correlation between what happened to the Erikson's dam and this one? Bettina stated that at last meeting we would get up to speed on other topics, such as conservation, or historical, or environmental facts. We should put up panels at the site of the location's history. Funding for these signs is possibly from CPC, or other agencies.

Bob Whittlesey said the AHA can fund the feasibility study for the affordable housing when the committee is ready.

Bill K. will get the Historic Commission to do a study, but will wait until after the poison ivy has died back in November.

Studies needed to be continued at next meeting, to be complied at next meeting

Meeting adjourned at 9pm.

Next meeting Aug 1 and 15.

**Respectfully submitted by Michele Holland**