

**53 River Street Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Acton Town Hall, Room 204**  
**June 13, 2018**  
**7:00 PM**

Committee Chairman, Peter Berry called the meeting to order at 7:05.

**Committee Members present:** Peter Berry, Bill Klauer, Cami Duquet, Bob Whittlesey, Bill Alesbury, John Cook, Pete Hocknell, Michele Holland, Lou York.

Tom Tidman, and Bettina Abe, along with many members from the public also attended.

Call to order at 7:05

Discrepancy are noted on committee charge numbers of members . Peter needs to redo the charge from 7 voting members, and 3 associates. We now have 8 full members and 2 associates. At the last vote 2 associate member voted and that was recorded as 5 in favor and 4 opposed, Cami and Peter Hocknell voted against, Peter Berry abstained to keep the process in order. We need to go back to the BOS and change the charge. We could increase it to 8 full or or move one full member to an associate. Suggest to ask BOS to increase to 10 members. No vote needed, will put into the consent agenda at BOS

There is public concern about the vote that was taken last meeting.

Discussion of the Affordable Housing Lazaro had planned to put 24 units on site, (no 40B) (South Acton Zoning District) but wetlands would not allow the full 24. S. Acton village zoning allows lots 10,000SF lots, Floor area ratio zoning is dense like commercial, allows for more lots. 53 River St was purchased, to foster the goal of the 2020 Master Plan vision, to increase open space, provide conservation land and/or provide small scale affordable housing.

CPA allows for both affordable housing funding and open space funding, where these groups may be at cross purposes, and the CPC can overcome. Originally Town Meeting voted to appropriate the funds to purchase with these 3 concepts: affordable housing, open space and preservation of historic property.

Kelly Cronin slide show was discussed. Preferences of town members, especially those that attend the meetings, town as a whole were discussed. Affordable housing is a goal the town wants to meet. Housing production plan was adopted by town, including 40bs, and low income rentals are run by Acton Housing Authority (AHA). Affordable housing must have deed restrictions, looking for 10% goal of overall properties. We are in the Boston statistical area, income limits based on% of average income. AHA owns 168 units, Windsor St , 1-2 Sachus Way, and 3-14 Sachus Way have 23 units of senior house at McCarthy , then family units, with set rents at 30% of their income, rest is subsidized by state. 25 Scattered condos around also. Town gives CPC money to support these homes. There is also a group house for mental disability.

Discussion of slides continued. 1960 passed the 40B law, called the anti snob zoning act; to address the housing shortage Acton needs to meet the target of 10%. Refer to the slides for the various numbers. Slides are to be put on the 53 River St website for the public.

We are at 6.5% low income housing currently, we need several hundred to reach goal. Project is being proposed to help meet these goals include the lot on Powder Mill Rd, Rt. 62, past Last National Wine Co, but the lot goes into Maynard. However a decision must be made to divide up the rental units between the 2 towns. There are 250 rental units at Avalon, which is moderate income rental and gets counted towards the towns 10%. All units are counted in this case because these are rentals. Habitat received a lot, on River St. There are various affordable housing units in S Acton Zoning.

Question: could we get a look at the town map with the placement of affordable housing units? Planning dept. has a map on paper and we could ask to get this. Possible able to condense the entire town map, not just 40B.

We must gather all info on all 3 possibilities, housing, historic and open space, and we must report to BOS to identify issues against affordable housing because that was on the original directive. We have a year to get back to the BOS.

Question” Senior housing includes disabled, which was affirmed, preferential treatment given to disabled people depending on available appropriate unit. We have many affordable housing units that are 2 story, without elevators.

Question ”Is it financially feasible? Is there a smaller concept easier quicker to build? Could take a long time to gain the money. The old HS is a good example of well-done affordable housing, Sachem is another.

Kathy Acerbo-Bachman 50 River St. “ Helpful to spend time with this presentation. Good to have housing authority to do a presentation. Ask for a 45 minutes on conservation and one on preservation. Peter agreed to do this. We will devote 45 minutes at next meetings to each issue. Statement that modest income families that cannot afford to live in Acton was questioned. Is affordable house equivalent an entitlement, as is to clean air? It would be good to have a member from conservation and historic to have balanced discussions.”

Another member of the public “The effect of affordable house on neighbors needs to be considered. River St has the only 40b in an historic district in town. He felt that area has done their duty towards affordable housing. Please be careful about what is proposed in an historic district. Values are affected in the area. Look at other sections of town for affordable housing. No stores for the residence. Too much traffic will occur.

Mark Kennell 56 River ST. Committee asked for input, but voted differently than what the visitors voted for. Committee rushed to this decision. Community input is not valued.

Terra Friedrichs hoped the context of this discussion would have included 3,000 condos in Acton and that we rank the top provider of affordable housing. Do not confuse the right to shelter with the right to housing. Pro building favorable committee members are using a vulnerable pawn to build housing. Suggested that we need to look in other parts of town for affordable housing, Kmart, Faulkner Hill.

Perception is that the public was invited. Not just abutters, the result was clearly against affordable house and for open space. Contributed to the democratic process but the next vote their voices were not heard.

Discussion on the vote after the letter from a private person. Also discussed the Conway students directive.

It is crucial that we frame this exercise to what it was, a non-binding study. Also a chance to look at feedback. Felt the committee actions were wayward.

It is very beneficial to hear from the public. It is also premature to say the decision needs to be made now. Decision is a 12 month process. We need to vet affordable housing sites, mandate from the state. Certain aspects of affordable housing may be detrimental, but affordable housing is a noble concept that we should not turn against. More information needs to be gathered to show detriment to community. Pros and cons of each of the 3 directions are needed.

We need hard data to explain why affordable housing is detrimental, consider why we need more recreation in this area, since we can go to the Fire station, Great Hill. How much recreation more do we need. A Benefits cost analysis would be helpful to present to BOS.

John Cook the purpose of the vote was to give instructions to Conway to give priority of uses. Public input shows the housing was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> below historical and ecological significance. This is early, we should have given a charge to Conway based on community input. We will get less value out of this plan as a result.

Bill Klauer stated he was not happy about the process. Conway came in too early, so we may not have gotten our money's worth. We should have discussed which direction before the Conway study.

Peter Berry stated students from Conway were presenting concepts only. Conway sent an email they were not happy with the vote, Peter stated they must comply. They wanted to talk to Selby. They stated they will develop 2 plans/designs. One consistent with committee vote and one that they think the contract called for.

Deliverable due at end of June. 2 plans would be fine, Peter was at the presentation of the Conway school to their mentors.

Cami stated the plans are not binding and will have to come after ecology and engineer studies. The presentation for Housing was helpful, and we should do 2 other presentation. Housing in the flood plan is not a good idea.

Remnants of old dam should be studied by an engineer.

Michele stated that she voted to get more bang from the drawings leaving out minimal ecology only.

If Bill made a motion to reconsider our vote, would it change. The students are working on their designs now, and we may not have time.

Generally speaking the committee feels these drawings are just a beginning.

Question from public. Is it backwards to study whether spending money on study is warranted  
We need to continue to gather data

Question from public: the Conway plan, what was the goal? To get initial ideas. To give us conceptual visual ideas to begin our discussion.

Tom Tidman conservation commission, stated to clarify this lot is not in a 100 year flood plain. A fairly significant amount of land is buildable. The dam is still up for discussion as to whether we remove it, whole or part. Civil engineers are next step. River St going one way and a sidewalk answers need to be determined.

Terra says 100 year floods are regularly researched on the FEMA maps. Look at the observable flood zone.

We need to understand the difference between flood zone and flood plane

There are a couple hundred families near river, and are concerned about the removal of the dam and potential flooding. Fort Pond Brook runs into Warners pond in Concord.

Minutes of last meeting . We must change the description of vote to say 5 to 2. Vote to approve the minutes was unanimous.

Press relations: Beacon has not been recording accurately recently, as notes next. Kate McCarthy from Beacon has interest in this work. Bill stated that the mill was on site from 1835 to 1935, when it burned. It was one of the larger business in S Acton. A few corrections needed such as "It was the mission of this group to remove the dam". Bettina says the data in the article was miss reported. We need a correction from Beacon. We need to look at Kate's blog, and to send a letter requesting corrections. Kate used the link to the town docs and the Conway school. Bill K will draft the letter. Peter will work with Bill for letter.

Application for funding from the Div. of Ecological Restoration (DER under the Dept. of Fish and Game) was discussed. DER offers funding of many of the studies that will be needed. Bettina states there are no strings to this funding. If you are selected to have priority status, you stay at that level as a selected project. Control remains with Acton. Huge opportunity to be selected for the advice will be supplied. We needed archeology and hydraulic study, traffic study and possible others. Condition of the dam, a civil engineer. Div. has expertise in many areas, but we may need to fund further studies. CPC may help fund. Tom T says DER cover studies through their general contractors, as well as through their in house engineers. 53 River St is noted that it is 1 mile, but that is River St in total. Noted by Bettina and will be corrected. Also design concept on pg. 7 is open ended. Terra says there are no designs currently. But we would be developing these concepts first. Terra is concerned that this is would push the housing issue.

Is the funding annual? There is an example of a project that utilized their work in New Bedford area.

Question from the public: Concern over making a plan that would then give it a push to be completed. Morison Farm Ice House was voted down as example.

Bettina reiterated that all the studies from DER are available should we be selected as a project, and paid for by DER. Someone suggested that the wording of "oversight" be removed but we were reminded that this is an offer only.

Michele motioned to instruct the town to submit the authorization to apply for this funding from DER. Discussion ensued. We are reminded from Cami that the grant would pay for the needed studies. The deadline to apply for this grant is June 25<sup>th</sup>. It was also noted that when the contract is presented to us, should we win their approval for the project funding, then we can reject it if it seems to have constraints. We could get the historical study funded. Bill asked if we can resubmit this plan for another engineer, and the answer was yes, but we have the opportunity to get these studies funded and there is no cost to apply. The vote was 5 full time members in favor. Peter abstained and both associates would have voted in favor.

Focus on next meeting will be to present the historical aspects of the project, and then at the meeting that followed to present the ecological aspects.

Next meeting is on June 20<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in the rec room. The following meeting will be July 18<sup>th</sup>, and then August 1<sup>st</sup>.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:06pm

Respectfully submitted by Michele Holland