

07 November 2018

**53 River Street Master Planning Committee Meeting
Acton Recreation Center Building**

53 River St Committee members present:

Peter Berry
Bill Alesbury
Lou York
Don Boyle
Peter Hocknell
Bill Klauer

Historic District Commission members present:

Jon Benson
Anita Rogers
Ronald Regan
Maria Crowley

At 7:02 the meeting was called to order.

Citizen's Concerns: None.

Fun Fact: Peter Berry described the life of Ammi Ruhamah Faulkner, whose name is found on a memorial marker in South Acton.

Minutes from the 17 October 2018 meeting: Don Boyle motioned to approve, with edits. Bill Alesbury seconded. Motion was approved unanimously.

Historic District Commission (HDC) members present at the meeting:

Peter Berry asked what concerns the members present have with the project.

Peter then provided a project synopsis:

- The dam structure itself is under the purview of the HDC
- What will be the status of the upstream meadow remains to be seen
- The dam integrity study is underway
- Both hydrology and hydraulics (H&H) need to be studied
- If CPC funds are awarded at the spring 2019 town meeting, it is likely that the H&H study will commence in the summer of 2019
- We as the 53 River Street Committee want to touch base with the HDC to begin conversations over future development at the site

Anita Rogers said that depending on study outcome, that will have a significant bearing on what will be done at the site. She communicated that there was no feeling of historic value regarding the concrete block building. The dam may be of greater interest; safety first of course being most important. If the dam were to be preserved, a maintenance plan will need to be determined.

Selby shared that the committee applied for a Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) grant, and we expect a determination in a month or so. It should be noted the DER in general prefers to remove dams. We had originally applied as a DER “priority project” to try and obtain funding for both dam safety and H&H studies, among others.

On November 8, GZA will start the structural analysis of the dam. It is currently listed as a Class II hazard with the Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety.

Possible funding sources include:

- DER Grant
- CPA funding for H&H study

We are also asking for CPA funding for a cultural resources study (archeological resources). If artifacts are discovered, a full archeological study would be required (similar to Pine Hawk site).

Right now, we are trying to assess what is on the property and what is the integrity status of the dam. The dam itself is a historic structure – perhaps keeping part of the dam intact is an option?

In terms of the building itself; it is over 50 years old and thus “historic”. Beyond that however, it is simply a concrete block structure located on a concrete slab. It is also currently leaking.

Possibilities of uses of the 53 River Street site discussed include:

- Riverwalk
- Historic - mill structures
- Open space
- Recreation
- Housing – a citizen raised concerns of housing in the area in general (not just with regards to affordable housing). These concerns she listed included: power outages, brown water, traffic, rate of speed, road maintenance (vegetation overgrowth). This is an issue with the Flannery houses, due to density requirements in the South Acton Zoning district.

A Certificate of Appropriateness from the HDC will ultimately be required for the project.

Selby posed this question to the HDC members present – can you apply for demolition permit without a full plan in place?

Ron Regan: Removing Lazaro paving structures would benefit the district.

We should keep the gatehouse (by the tail race), keep the stone piers in the river

Lighting = important (or lack thereof so not to disturb wildlife)

Fence = current one eventually would be removed

Is property self-insured by the town? Yes

If the dam is removed, periodic mowing would be required in order to prevent red maple swamp and inevitable succession.

During the earlier HDC site visit, they noted that signs of its historic past are evident. When asked whether they have any visions, and what would be appropriate, these points were raised:

- Given obvious lack of maintenance of structures, they would need more information in order to guide decisions.
- No particular desire to put structures there. Other places in town are better suited for housing.
- Prefer historic or recreation uses, rather than conservation.

Bill Klauer noted that this is the site of 2 former mills. The Lazaro building appears to be sitting on the base of one of the historic mill buildings. Perhaps that portion could be used as a future observation deck? The dam actually is comprised in 2 parts. The first, having a stone end on the River Street side, was constructed circa 1835. The remaining portion was built circa 1935 and is made of cement.

A question was raised concerning how maintenance costs will be covered. For conservation lands, often stewardship groups or volunteers help with this.

For the 53 River Street spot on Acton TV, Peter Berry and Selby will provide Peter Hocknell with the necessary contact information for scheduling.

At the Board of Selectmen (BoS) meeting on November 5, the proposed 53 River Street CPA proposal for \$35,000 was met favorably by the BoS.

Next Steps:

Next committee meeting will take place on December 5. The GZA results of the dam integrity hopefully will be available then. Also, hopefully the status of our DER application will be known.

We, as a committee, need to meet with the Conservation Commission at some point soon. However, it may be more valuable to have Tom Tidman bring ConCom on a site walk first? In terms of potentially filling the raceway, a site is allowed to fill up to a 500 square foot finger-like

area without mitigation. Otherwise, a similarly sized piece of upland has to be given up as wetland (1:1 mitigation).

Regarding having Linda McElroy come to present -- Bill Klauer is trying to get in touch with her to arrange this.

The committee is obliged to at least consider housing as an option for the site.

We need to provide a committee activity summary for the Town's Annual Report. Peter Berry to provide?

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 pm.