

Bristol Mills Dam *ad hoc* Advisory Committee

Minutes of Meeting Tuesday, January 24, 2017

Committee members present: Jim Albright, Pam Allen, Phil Averill, Bill Benner, Claire Enterline, Chuck Farrell, John Freburger, James Hatch.

Also present: Chris Hall, Chad Hanna, Caroline Hove [?], Slade Moore, Rick Poland, Steve Whitehead; Joe MacLean and Jim Wallace [?], Wright-Pierce.

The meeting was called to order by chair Enterline at 6.05 pm. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, attendees introduced themselves.

1. Minutes:

Moved by Hatch, seconded by Farrell, to accept the Minutes of December 7, subject to correction of the names of attendees (Jim Hatch, Steve O'Bryan); and, under the list of options on the table, amend the bullet point "Complete removal of the dam" with the additional words "with alternative water control measures." Passed unanimously.

Moved by Benner, seconded by Enterline, to accept the Minutes of January 10, subject to amendment of the list of topics for presentations, the pre-penultimate bullet point to read, "Experience of comparable towns and watersheds – e.g. the Sheepscot AND DAMARISCOTTA RIVERS." Passed unanimously.

2. Scope of Services for the contract with Wright-Pierce:

Enterline led a review which included substantial comment from the Committee and public attendees. Key topics included:

- Whether, and which, water quality parameters should be considered. Water clarity, dissolved oxygen levels and biological factors such as nutrient levels were discussed. The PWA – through Averill – can make available Secchi disk records dating back 20 years, and bacteria counts at the swimming hole for the last four years.
- How to incorporate economic value calculations, such as property appraisals or 'natural capital' such as the alewife run, which were open to charges of being subjective. These should be kept outside the scope of Wright-Pierce's work.
- Concern was expressed that we should not lose sight of real values, such as maintaining the Town's last freshwater swimming hole, because of the difficulty in economically quantifying their value.
- The process for changing the Scope of Work, or other amendments to the contract, was questioned. The draft contract simply requires any amendment to be in writing and signed by representatives of the Town and Wright-Pierce. This reflects past practice for the Town. The Town Administrator will satisfy himself whether this gives sufficient protection to the Town.

It was moved by hatch, seconded by Farrell, to accept the Scope of Work with amendments, and forward the contract to the Selectmen for approval.

3. Joe McLean, of Wright-Pierce, gave a slide presentation on water levels between the dam and Biscay Pond. Copies of the presentation will be circulated and incorporated in the Committee Binders; and the accompanying map and charts will be posted in the Town office.

A key finding is that the ledge and narrows at the Benner Road stone arch bridge represent a natural 'dam' which, absent the Bristol Mills dam, would define the base water level for the upstream watershed; this 'dam' is only approximately 12 inches lower than the water level normally impounded by the Bristol Mills Dam. Between the Benner road bridge and the Dam, the natural bed of the stream has a steep gradient down to the foot of the dam, a distance of approximately 750 feet.

In the ensuing discussion, points raised included:

- The degree to which water levels above Partridge Bridge (outflow of Biscay Pond) are affected; Pemaquid Pond is considered essentially the same level as Biscay.
 - The seasonal range. Any new water control measures should mimic the existing seasonal regime.
 - The impact of marginal changes in water levels on the surface area and inundation of the wetlands – to be discussed at a future meeting.
 - Whether a purpose-built swimming hole could be constructed, for example at the Ellingwood Park.
4. Rick Poland, of the Bristol Fish Committee, gave an account of his, and the Committee's, work over the past 15 years.
In his teens, in the 1970s, he remembered significant numbers of fish using the fish passage. However on his taking up the work of alewife passage in 2002, no work had been done for a number of years. A number of experiments were made with the baffles and entrance to the fish ladder but he saw no fish successfully pass for perhaps five years. Alewives continued to head for the dam where he saw fish leap as high as 3 to 4 feet in futile attempts to pass.
Circa 2009, he and Dale Prentice built a wire leader to prevent fish reaching the dam, and built a leader to assist fish into the lower fish ladder. Later it was established that removing boards to lower the dam water level improved passage. Nevertheless the Fish Committee still spends hours each year 'assisting' the fish to pass. He personally puts in perhaps 80 hours each spring. Fish numbers are highly variable from year to year.
In the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:
 - Is there sediment build-up behind the dam? No.
 - Could the new fishway be built in stages? Yes, perhaps the lower half first, but this would lose economies of mobilization.
 - Who owns the dam, the state or town? The town: state funding was in exchange for an initial 25 year lease, but it subsequently reverted to the town.
 5. Other matters:
Press release: Enterline will draft a press release on progress to date.

Next meeting: Discussion whether to hold a meeting in two weeks (when the Town Office is not available), because of the number of matters to discuss among the Committee; or wait until factual information has been gathered before opening up the discussion. Motion proposed by Freburger, seconded Allen, to hold next meeting in 5 weeks, on February 28th. Carried unanimously.

A motion to Adjourn was proposed at 8.10 pm by Benner and seconded by Farrell.
Passed 8 – 0.

Christopher Hall
Town Administrator