

SEEKONK PLANNING BOARD
Work Session
Selectmen Meeting Room
June 27, 2023

Present: Ch. Sullivan, S. Foulkes, B. Hoch, D. Roderick, S. Escaler, and John Aubin (Town Planner)

Absent with cause: P. L. Dunn

Opened the meeting at 7:08 PM

Work Session:

1. Elect a new Vice Clerk member

D. Sullivan asked for a motion to open nominations.

D. Roderick made the motion to open nominations; S. Foulkes seconded. B. Hoch made a nomination to make S. Escaler the new vice-clerk. Seconded by D. Roderick.

A motion to close the nominations was made by D. Roderick and seconded by B. Hoch.

VOTE: 5-0-0

2. Municipal Vulnerability Program Attleboro Dyeworks dam assessment project:
public community meeting

J. Aubin introduced the next agenda item and stated that this is an informational presentation, as no decisions have been made or will be made tonight; this project is still in the assessment phase.

David Cabral, DPW superintendent, stated that the presentation shown tonight will be made available for residents to view through the town website.

Kim Armstrong, a structural engineer from GPI introduced herself and her partner Sage Winter, an architect from GPI for this project in charge of what the site can look like.

The presentation introduced what the Attleboro Dye works site looked like before and what it looks like today and why. There was a fire back in 2012 that significantly damaged both the ADW building and the dam. The dam now serves no purpose as its original function was used solely for the ADW building. Current pictures of the conditions of the ADW dam were shown. There is significant physical damage to the dam and would come at a significant cost to repair. K. Armstrong stated that there is a strong push with most of the dams along the 10-mile river to remove them in order to help the return of the fish migration.

S. Winter then went over some of the effects of removing the dam. She stated that removing the dam will change the landscape so she stated that she would be going over some of those possible changes. An aerial view of the area from both sides of Pond St. was shown. Images of what the stream could look like with the removal of the dam was shown. Sage then brought forth a development proposal of possible trail paths and offered possible effects and images in relation.

K. Armstrong stated that removal of the dam is the cheaper option. In the removal option the pond would be removed as well. Potential funding options were then presented and explained. MVP has already shown an interest in this project, would be able to give a 25% match, and would be an option to fund construction as well. She stated their main goal tonight is to solicit opinions from the residents to see what they would like to see and if they want the dam removed or not.

D. Cabral then addressed the audience to explain what steps have been taken so far in this process and what the next steps are.

A resident from the audience spoke up to say that he had “fixed” the dam and raised the water level about 3-4 feet. D. Cabral explained that the dam is still missing certain structural elements and that the site should not be touched or fixed by any residents.

D. Sullivan asked D. Cabral if, process wise, the real decision would come from the Select Board. D. Cabral answered that yes and it will most likely come down to costs and ecological impacts. D. Sullivan asked when he thinks the Select Board will be able to come to a decision or what the timeline looks like. D. Cabral stated that it will probably be around the end of July that they will make a final decision to either repair or remove the dam. He stated the town is responsible for continuing the maintenance on the dam which will prove to be an expensive part of repairing and keeping the dam if that is chosen. As indicated from the presentation, the dam really serves no purpose without the ADW facility in use.

J. Aubin stated that there will most likely be at least another year of remediation on site. He said there will most likely be an RFP sent out to request proposals for the site and have a process to review the proposals.

D. Sullivan wanted to clarify that a decision won't happen in 6 months, it looks like 1-2 years until a decision is made. J. Aubin stated that it will be at least a year and a half to work on the RFP.

B. Hoch asked if any study has been done on the ecological impact the removal of the dam will have on the stream and further down the stream. K. Armstrong answered that multiple studies have been completed in relation to the ecological impacts and then went on to give examples. D. Cabral stated that in Pawtucket, RI, there is a similar situation where they have a dam and there is strong support to remove that dam as well.

B. Hoch asked if GPI is definitely in favor of removal of the dam. K. Armstrong answered that yes, and if not completely than a partial removal of the dam because certain areas are severely damaged. B. Hoch then asked what effect this would have on residents. K. Armstrong answered that the pond will shrink in size from a body of water to channel of water and become more of a stream.

D. Roderick asked how to solicit town opinion for removal or repair of the dam. He asked if we are to rely on the Select Board to get the word out or otherwise? K. Armstrong stated that she was relying on the outreach from meetings but is looking for other outlets if suggested. D. Cabral stated that they are looking for some guidance for a bigger public outreach.

It was noted by D. Cabral that the community/abutters around the ADW and up to the Attleboro line were notified about this meeting and topic of discussion tonight.

D. Cabral stated that there has been a lot of clean up that has already happened at the ADW site and not just the dam. K. Armstrong also added that there is also a flood risk at the dam and removing it would reduce the liability on the town significantly.

S. Foulkes mentioned possibly scheduling a site visit to the dam and J. Aubin said that could definitely be arranged. S. Foulkes also asked what the water level would look like after the dam was removed. K. Armstrong stated that while it is hard to predict, it should look a lot like what the rest of the stream looks like.

D. Sullivan asked if there was anyone in the audience who wished to voice their opinion.

A resident rose to speak, Josephine Cinq-Mars from 19 Maple Ave, expressed concern about sacrificing a pond and thinks that the whole north side of the town should be notified about the possibility of removing the dam. She thinks the Pond St bridge needs more attention than this. D. Sullivan stated that the Pond St. Bridge project is not under the purview of the Planning Board and it is ultimately the decision of the Select Board. He also stated that the Pond St. Bridge is not a topic of discussion for tonight. J. Cinq-Mars also asked about the status of progress being made on the actual building on site. J. Aubin stated that the remediation is still ongoing and encouraged everyone to check out the information provided on the Planning Board page on the website. She stated that she does not believe a walkway path is what the residents want. J. Aubin stated that at one of the first public meetings that took place in regard to this topic, the residents expressed the want for public access and recreational use which is why the presentation of what it could look like with walkways was shown tonight.

K. Armstrong suggested GPI create a survey that could be posted on the town website to help solicit public opinion. J. Aubin stated that it is a good suggestion and can be done through the TA's (Town Administrator) office.

Another resident, Scott Cinq-Mars of 21 maple Ave, stated that he has a concern about taking down the dam on Pond Street. He stated that if the ADW dam is taken down and also the dam in Pawtucket mentioned earlier, there will be a great flow of water during storms. He expressed concern of water overflowing onto the roads going into East Providence.

D. Sullivan asked for a motion for a 5-minute recess. D. Roderick made the motion, seconded by B. Hoch. VOTE: 5-0-0

Reconvened 8:05pm

3. Master Plan Update:
 - a. Circulation

b. Public Facilities

J. Aubin introduced the master plan update elements such as circulation and public facilities. He stated tonight's discussion is to look at where we are and where we want to go. The Fire Chief and DPW Superintendent are in attendance to help guide our conversation and provide useful information. The superintendent of the water department was invited but was unable to make it tonight. J. Aubin stated that adding support and mention of the construction of two new facilities such as the South End fire station and the new DPW building in the master plan will be implemented going forward. He also stated mention of the bikeway and maintaining the towns existing public facilities.

D. Sullivan drew attention to the waste water management and water resource plan. J. Aubin agreed that the stormwater utility discussion deserves a place in the master plan.

D. Sullivan stated that in the proposed elements, it talks about public waste water and the possibility of discussing sewers. J. Aubin stated that right now, sewers are not really an option for the town for multiple reasons. D. Sullivan asked how the stormwater management would play into public waste water like a sewer system, ground saturation, etc. He stated while it might not be today's issue, it could become an issue in a few years. J. Aubin stated that if the waste water management is not addressed, then it's very realistic that we will end up with bigger issues and gave an example down in Cape Cod. D. Sullivan asked if it would be appropriate to forward a memo to the select Board and TA to create some dialog so they may look at this topic more directly.

D. Cabral stated that outfall locations are being tested so that any areas where contaminations are found are noted to be ranked from highest priority. It was stated that some locations may prove to have a harder solution than others. He stated that there will be a second meeting for another presentation; a date has not been set yet but it will be in the near future. He stated this was the first meeting to the Board to show that there is a need for stormwater utility.

D. Sullivan asked D. Cabral if it would be helpful when the second presentation happens to have a joint meeting with Conservation and Board of Health. D. Cabral stated that the Conservation agent is already involved in this process but that we could get the rest of the commission involved to get more input if that is necessary. J. Aubin stated that because this will eventually be going in front of Town Meeting, that the more support for the project received, the better.

D. Sullivan asked J. Aubin if we could organize another joint meeting with the Superintendent from the Water Department and D. Cabral and Chief Lowrey so we can have a conversation about water supply needs and get an idea of the water districts master plan as well.

The next item to be discussed was the transportation element in the master plan. J. Aubin summarized the items identified.

D. Sullivan asked D. Cabral if there was any more feedback from the State with regards to Lincoln Street and Route 44. D. Cabral answered that the State put the flashing beacon up but that's the extent of what he sees happening out there. They were trying to get a speed reduction in that zone but he was unsure how that panned out.

A discussion about reducing speed was had. D. Cabral explained that by reducing the speed down and enforcing it, it would help reduce the risk of a crash. He stated that there are two options of either cutting the roadway down to increase visibility or to reduce the speed and enforce it. Reducing the speed limit and enforcing it is a much more viable option for right now. He explained that cutting the roadway down will be a very big and expensive undertaking for the future.

A conversation about speed on Arcade Ave ensued.

D. Sullivan asked if the traffic light would be operating all the time? D Cabral answered that it will operate 24/7 as a traffic light and will also have a pedestrian button for people to cross the street.

B. Hoch asked if there was any state support at all when it comes to video speed enforcement in school zones. He stated that he knows they have enacted video enforcement of school zones in RI and that it has worked well. D. Cabral answered that right now in the state, video enforcement of speed is just not allowed but he believes we may see it in the future.

D. Sullivan stated he knows in the past the town had to get permission from the state in order to change or alter speed limits and stop signs and asked D. Cabral if this was still true. D. Cabral answered that the State does regulate the speed limits on the roads, however, the town can put up stops signs on any road that is under jurisdiction of the town. Roads that are not under the town's control, like state roads, have a process the town must follow is they would like to request a stop sign be put in.

J. Aubin stated that he does not think he will be making too many changes in regards to circulation. He does have some resident comments that he wanted to present to the board.

4. Discussion of residential cisterns with the Fire and Water Department

D. Sullivan then introduced the next item and stated that unfortunately, the water department could not attend tonight.

J. Aubin stated that this is a continuation over the past year or so of our discussion about options for fire safety. He stated that they have stopped collecting the fire safety fees. This discussion is for when public water is not available to subdivisions. Cisterns have been a big topic of discussion when it comes to alternative fire safety methods. There are 8 cisterns in town already and 6 are non-operational. Another alternative system is the utilization of a fire pond, which can be problematic from an environmental stand point. And the final option was "the dry pipe system" which is essentially putting in a dry piping system that would allow a tanker truck to hook up and provide water to a hydrant.

D. Sullivan had wanted to ask the Water department if there was any interest in expanding the water service areas. J. Aubin stated that from the conversations he has been in, there was no interest shown to do that.

D. Cabral stated that in his conversations with the water department, they talked about the possible locations to replace the cisterns with water where it might be feasible.

Sandra Lowrey, Fire Chief of Seekonk, stated the 3 potential locations where it would be possible to replace the cisterns with fire hydrants, for firefighter purposes only, would be Mederios Farm Road, Pine Street (Robin Crest) and Letendre Drive.

S. Lowrey stated that she did find a company in NH who could come out to test, fix, or replace the cisterns. However, it is very costly to do this and the budget for it would only last about 7 years. It costs about \$2,000-3,000 just to get a tank inspected. S. Lowrey stated that they are still waiting to hear back on some prices for installation etc. For the existing cisterns in place, it is unknown how deep they were installed but we do know they are made of fiberglass tanks and can hold 10,000 gallons. It would require significant excavation to install new cisterns as they should be buried at least 4ft underground.

B. Hoch asked what the average amount of water is used to put out a fire. S. Lowrey stated that at one of the more recent and more damaging fires, they used about 15,000-16,000 gallons. B. Hoch also stated that it seems like it would be better to have our own tanker truck. S. Lowrey stated that there are many factors other than price such as staffing that affect that decision even though she would also like Seekonk to have their own.

D. Sullivan wanted clarification from Town Counsel what the Board should do and what we need to have in our Rules and Regulations. J. Aubin stated that Dave's specific question was not asked, so she did not provide an answer to it but that he would follow up with her and get an answer.

S. Lowrey stated clearly that she realizes we have a problem but that she does not believe installing new cisterns to be the answer when we have no one who is authorized to maintain or fix these tanks.

B. Hoch asked the Fire Chief what she thought the best solution to be whether it is cisterns, tanker truck, etc. S. Lowrey replied that in a perfect world, she would want their own tanker truck. She stated that the Fire Department does not have enough man power to be able to have a tanker truck. Therefore, she is not sure what the best solution is. For right now, it seems as though they should find a way to fix the non-operational cisterns back in order so that they can use them. Further conversation about how to solve the issue was had.

A conversation about Taunton and their cisterns was had. S. Lowrey stated that only a qualified person can maintain the cisterns and they do not have a qualified person to do that. She informed the board that Rehoboth's DPW maintains the cisterns in Taunton. Unfortunately, using Rehoboth's DPW is not feasible for Seekonk. The only company she has found that could maintain cisterns is the one she had mentioned earlier in NH.

D. Sullivan suggested that D. Cabral and S. Lowrey take back their notes from this meeting to the Water Department Superintendent to discuss further with him. Then he would like for everyone to come back together and have another meeting to address the options we have.

J. Aubin stated he would follow up with the Board's questions to Attorney Kwessel and also summarize the discussion this evening. Eventually, the Board will have to meet with the Select Board and present their findings.

5. Discussion of joint meeting with Select Board
 - a. Subdivision status and enforcement
 - b. Sign by-law review

A. J. Aubin stated that he has made a request to town council to attend one of the upcoming meetings in open and executive session with regard to enforcement on specific developments. He is in the process of creating a subdivision spreadsheet that shows where the developments stand in terms of acceptance and what is still needed for acceptance.

D. Roderick asked if we are going to list how much it costs. J. Aubin said that as far back as we have record, yes.

B. J. Aubin stated that he let Town Counsel know that Select Board has requested we look at the sign by law. He will have a draft analysis he prepared for the Board at the July 11th meeting along with the amendments that were already discussed with the Select Board in regards to the overlay. J. Aubin then went onto speak about what the process will entail for the board.

6. Correspondence

None.

7. Approval of Minutes: June 13th, 2023 and June 21st, 2023

D. Sullivan asked if anyone had any amendments for the June 13th minutes and saw none. **S. Foulkes made the motion to accept the minutes from June 13th and D. Roderick seconded. VOTE: 5-0-0**

B. Hoch made the motion to accept the minutes from June 21st; seconded by S. Escaler. D. Roderick abstained. VOTE: 4-0-1

D. Sullivan stated to the Board that they will be having two meetings in July.

J. Aubin stated that there is a vacancy on the Planning Board and if anyone is interested in filling out and sending in the talent bank form found on the town website.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by D. Roderick; Seconded by S. Foulkes.

VOTE 5-0-0

Adjourned at 10:03 PM

Respectfully Submitted by,
Stephanie Iagatta, Secretary
Planning Board

*Formally accepted on 10/10/2023
4 in favor, 0 against, 1 abstention*

Full Video available to view on TV9 Seekonk Community Access Television

Link: <http://tv9seekonk.com/>