Conservation Commission Meeting

Sharon Community Center

September 18, 2014

Peg Arguimbau, Chairperson, Elizabeth McGrath, Merideth DeCarbonnel, Alan Westman and Stephen Cremer were the members present. Keevin Geller arrived a little late to the meeting and Linda Orel was absent from the meeting. The Conservation Administrator, Greg Meister, was also present.

Meeting started at 7:50 pm

**7:45 pm – Hearing Continuance, 232-264 Norwood Street (Everett)**

**MooseHill Development Corp – Everett Street Paving**

**DEP File #SE280-0560**

MooseHill Development Corp asked for a hearing continuance.

Meister informed the committee that he met with Paul Brodmerkle, the Commissions Peer Review Consultant.  There was an initial review of revised figures.  There is still some work to be done.  Hearing will be continued to October 2nd ,if possible.

**Motion:** To continue hearing to October 2 at 7.45pm

Cremer, McGrath 6-0-0

**Review of September 4, 2014 meeting minutes:**

First sentence mid paragraph, page 3: not dam structure which needs repair, should instead say: “it is not the dam…”

2 paragraph up on page 3:  should say the wooden structure (not concrete/cement)

page 1 : Keevin Geller was present, Linda Orel was absent.

page 3: Where sentence begins: is not the dam structure which was ….   This sentence should be corrected to say “concern about negative impact of the dam.   Arguimbau, in speaking about pond, was concerned of the negative impact.

Page 5, minor wording.  Currently says that the recreation is responsible for the lake. This sentence should say that Recreation is responsible for recreational activities at the lake.

**Motion** to accept minutes as amended. Westman, McGrath 5-0-1

**8:00pm – Hearing Continuance - Notice of Intent, Old Post Road 40B Proposal**

**Sharon Residences, LLC**

Town council is trying to coordinate peer review of the project. It was also suggested that they review the pro-forma.  Mesiter spoke with the owner of the property and he agreed to donate 17 acres instead of doing a CR.  At this point, there is no reason for the applicant to come in.  It was mentioned that the Board of Health would also like a peer review of the project.

**Motion:** to continue the hearing until notification by applicant.

McGrath, DeCarbonnel. 5-0-0

**Discussion: Water Re-charge reports**

Reports and letters have been made available to folks.  Arguimbau asked how to proceed with and how to begin discussion of the reports distributed to Commission members and others. Use of the whiteboard? A timeline? Most likely a multiple meeting discussion.

McGrath asked Meister for IEP report as she could not access on line. Meister will get the report for her.

There are a lot of letters involved in the packet which was distributed to members.  There are a couple of issues going on.  Cedar Swamp has its own set of issues.  Maybe Cedar Swamp is not as urgent to discuss at this time. There may be three distinct things to discuss.  Define what to discuss and tackle each defined issue, one per meeting.

1. Groundwater recharge supply availability is probably the biggest issue.
2. Cedar swamp is its own section of some of the groundwater
3. Beaver Brook aquifer is another.

Understanding the aquifers is important to understanding the reports.  It is important that everyone has the same basic knowledge.

A question was asked if there was a way to get raw data from Eric Hooper?  Meister will put in writing, a request for that information.

DeCarbonnel believes that it is important to have groundwater, average rainfall and pumping volume data so that the Commission can begin to correlate the data and get a larger picture of what is going on, rather than only a snapshot.

Mesiter informed the Commission that he would take folks on a site visit to show visually what is written in the reports and what is being discussed. The DEP may have aerial photography and this could provide backup data to what we already have.

Arguimbau discussed the timing of future meetings.  October 2, October 16th. She suggested that before the Oct 16th  meeting, arrangements should be made for site visits.

October 16, Cheif Bernstein to come in (7:45pm). October 2, Schedule Rob McGrath at 7:45pm to discuss his “synopsis” of the reports.  (He is a hydrogeologist who offered to look at all the reports and prepare a condensed version for the Commission.). At 8:00pm, continuance of Old Post Road 40B if they are ready.  Reports will be discussed at 8:15pm.

Meister will send out an email to Commission members listing the dates and times he is available to take members on a site visit.

MWRA discussion: Geller mentioned that there were other developments in line which will put additional pressure on the Town’s water resources. He personally thinks that it is a no brainer to tie into MWRA, and the sooner the better.  10 years ago, BOS agreed that tying into the MWRA was a good idea, but nothing ever came of it.  To tie into Stoughton would be logical, but now that we are “at war” with Stoughton, we may not be able to do.  Once money spent for initial hookup, it is pay as you go.  The Town does not have to use, but there would be something in place in case a need were to arise down the road.

Meister informed the Commission that in a report from 2000, the consultant recommended hookup to MWRA. At that time, the consultants met with Lake Management.  To join the MWRA in 2000 it was relatively inexpensive. The request went in front of the BOS and then ended.  Perhaps if we get to the point where folks are not arguing with one another over whether there is a water re-charge problem or not, we could look into again, but we need to get to that point, and the Commission needs to get to that point.

Question was asked: Other than hooking up to the MWRA, could we add more wells?  Meister replied that he was not even sure that would be an option at this point.

It was mentioned that the major costs associated with MRWA is more with sewage (and hookup), than with water.   Geller again mentioned that he personally feels that something should originate from this board and that the Board should go to the BOS and say this needs to be done.

A question was asked as to why the Town did not hook up at Chemung Street (in Stoughton) when there was an opportunity to do so.  Meister preferred not to comment.

Meister believes that the Town relies on precipitation and rainwater and that it makes no sense to put this off. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that the MWRA will allow us to tie in at this time.  There is pressure from other municipalities who would like to tie in to the MWRA.  Additionally, there is a need to protect the Quabin Reservoir which may result in the MWRA denying the Towns request to tie in.

**Cremer**, moves to go on the record as supporting a connection to the MWRA water system. Geller seconded.  Vote, 6-0-0 that a letter should be drafted and sent to the BOS and CC’d to Eric Hooper. Either Arguimbau or Meister will sign.

**Lake Update**: The Lake is tied into water recharge.  The Friends of Lake Massapoag are now up to over 200 members.   McGrath will be the Commissions representative on the newly formed Lake Committee. A few other committees need to get back to the BOS to let them then know who their appointments are.  At some point, prior to the new committee meeting, the existing policy of how the Lake is managed should be discussed. The existing Lake Management policy should be explained, along with how the Lake is managed.  Meister would like to know what is wrong with the current management of the Lake. Arguimbau mentioned that perhaps there is nothing wrong with the management of the lake and that perhaps all that is needed is an explanation of what has been happening over the years so that people can understand the why and how things have been happening. Although the lake is low, the lake is healthier than it was prior to the existing policy.

Cremer mentioned that perhaps an organizational chart of those involved with the Lake would be helpful. There are and were ongoing communications taking place about the water level of the lake over the winter months. With respect to the citizens of the Town, they are not used to the lake being so low, especially so early in the lake season. The BOS office began receiving phone calls regarding the conditions of the lake. Meister was unaware that that the BOS office did not have the answers to give the residents who phoned.  He did not expect those who answered the phones to have answers, but thought the BOS would be aware of what was going on.

The amount of water released from the Lake is well below that which the DPW Superintendent feels should be let out.  At different times throughout the summer, Meister has shut off release, however the water still went down.  Evaporation is a small part of the low lake level, as well as other issues that are at play.  At this point, the lake is down 29 inches. Beginning in early June, Meister stopped letting water out of the Lake. The month of July was fine with precipitation, and the last six weeks have been dry.

Not an uncommon seasonal variation with the lake level decreasing. Other towns are facing the same concern with lower water levels of their lakes and ponds. At this time we have the attention of folks, which is a good time to tell the story as we understand it.  The lake is not down 29 inches because of Fanwart. There are additional, complex issues taking place including regulatory issues.

November 6th Commission meeting - discussion of the lake policy for our own presentation on how the Lake is managed. Discussion of why certain things are done with respect to the lake. This is also a good opportunity to keep the discussion going.

Lycott was out for a final check of the Lake.  It looks good and they will be preparing a report to submit to Lake Management.

DPW crew assisted Meister in scooping out sand at the Flume house.  Due to low levels of water, the water was not flowing downstream.

Last fall the lake was very low in an effort to rid the lake of Asian Clams. Some members recall that the last time the lake was as low as it is now, was in 1997.

A question was asked if there were a timeline (frame) to put forth our discoveries.

This is a good time to figure out what has been happening over the years and a good time to put pressure on the BOS. Discussions regarding the lake should continue so folks do not lose interest over the winter months. An action plan should be created, bringing folks on board and educating them. It is important to understand the problem.

At some point Meister will ask to go into executive session.  There is a need to discuss some things in confidence and he does not feel comfortable speaking in public and there are certain things from personnel standpoint that must be said in confidence.  Site visits will be complete prior to the meeting on October 2nd.  Rob McGrath will present to the commission his synopsis of the reports.  Would like to keep moving on this and not drag out the process. Ideally, would like to come to a consensus on an action plan, perhaps by November/December or possibly early January.

Geller would like to talk about Hammershop Dam

He went to inspect the dam with Meister.  He looked at the cement portion of the dam. Geller believes that the cement portion is in decent condition.  The boards though are rotted and falling apart. It is Geller’s belief that it is not a big deal to fix.  He mentioned that he would be able to donate lumber to fix the dam, or sell the lumber at his cost.  Geller also mentioned that he spoke with two contractors who said they would donate their time to fix the dam.

Geller mentioned that he heard talk about the Town spending $200,000 for a report on the dam and $600,000 for repair of the dam. He believes that this is crazy. He spoke with Selectman Heitin, but unfortunately, the State is now involved.

According to Meister, the Office of Dam Safety (ODS) came out to look at the site.  They received a complaint about the dam.  The ODS was to have received correspondence about the work on the dam, but did not. In conversation with Meister, it was explained that most likely would not have to repair the whole dam, but they would like a plan for repairing that which needed to be fixed.  The plan would need to be signed and stamped by a professional engineer.

Meister will speak with O’Cain to see if he would be amenable to this type of plan and perhaps set up another site visit so that Meister can explain what the Commission would like.

Arguimbau will draft a letter for immediate repair to the Dam which will include times and possible dates.  The Commission has money to assist in paying for any drawings which might be needed.  The letter will be addressed to O’Cain, Hooper and Turkington.

Westman, Cremer 6-0-0.

Cremer move adjourn meeting, Geller seconded.

6-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:12pm