

WEST BARNET DAM COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2017
MINUTES

The meeting was convened at 7:00 p.m. in the Barnet Library.

Committee members present: George Coppentrath, Don Easter, Joe Mangiapane, and David Price.

Others present: Mark Cote (Vermont Mold and Tool, Property Owner), Richard Downer (Property Owner), Robert Dufresne (Lake Harvey Association, Property Owner), Dylan Ford (Barnet Selectboard), and Ron Rhodes (Connecticut River Conservancy [CRC], Project Manager).

Introduction: Ms. Ford opened the meeting with introductions and noted the purpose of this initial committee meeting was to discuss the issue and clarify the current status of the dam project. She also indicated this project is finally gaining some momentum after years of work.

Current status: Mr. Rhodes summarized the current situation by noting the following ...

- On October 2nd the CRC sent an initial Request for Proposals (RFP) to 22 regional engineering firms.
- Funding for this initial study will come from the State of Vermont (\$25,000) and the CRC (\$5,000).
- This phase of the project will require a feasibility/alternatives analysis, necessary permits, survey, geotechnical report, preliminary 30% engineering design, landowner agreement, and letter of commitment from the dam owner (Town of Barnet).
- Various ideas for a “water control structure” to maintain the level of the lake have been discussed.
- Dredging accumulated silt from various areas is a possibility, if the state permits it.
- Submissions to the RFP are due on October 29th.
- At some point Judd Kratzer of Vermont Fish and Wildlife will be invited to participate. He will be interested in the preservation of rainbow trout and salmon.
- This project is an Ecosystem Restoration and therefore viewed differently than other projects. The state will make certain allowances, which it might not otherwise permit.

Discussion:

Ms. Ford indicated that ownership of the wetlands between the dam and the lake is unknown. It is sometimes referred to as “no man's land.” The ownership issue will need to be resolved.

Mr. Downer said he would like to see the wildlife and hydrology of the area considered as a first step. The control structure should be located as far down the outlet as possible. He noted that in the 19th century prior to construction of any dams, the lake level was two-three feet lower than it is now.

Mr. Dufresne outlined the steps involved in a typical engineering project. He questioned whether the “water control device” will count as a dam under 10VSA Chapter 43 and asked how the state will view wetlands that are not stable.

Mr. Rhodes noted that Steve Hanna of the Vermont Dam Safety Program and Danielle Owczarski of the Department of Environmental Conservation want this project to be successful in order to remove South Peacham Brook and Harvey Lake from the Altered Waters list. He emphasized the primary focus of a restoration project is on water quality. He believes the state Wetlands Committee will approve the necessary changes based on committee reaction to previous projects. Changes to manmade wetlands are not an issue, but respect for current loon nesting areas must be incorporated into the design. The engineering plan must also protect current structures – including the Harvey Mountain Road bridge – from damage due to stream head cutting. The CRC has funding with which to resolve the land ownership issue.

Mr. Dufresne suggested we amend the RFP to place more emphasis on the water control structure. However, the majority of the committee agreed it was too late to change the original RFP.

Ms. Ford noted there is always room for input from the town and committee; other options may be included as the project goes along.

Mr. Easter indicated his concern for the water level at the boat ramp and asked that the engineering company visit the launching area to take its needs into consideration.

Ms. Ford reiterated that the town, the dam committee, and the Lake Harvey Association maintain the position that lowering the lake level is not an option. She also stated that the current process costs us nothing and we are not required to accept any proposed solution if it does not suit our needs.

Mr. Rhodes noted the RFP reserves the right to modify or reject anything in the engineering submissions. He added it will be important to maintain flexibility in engineering because this project is unique and adequate solutions must be found.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.