

Lost Lake Watershed Advisory Committee (LLWAC)

Town of Groton, Groton, MA 01450 978-448-1111

Meeting Minutes - September 25, 2014

At Town Hall

Present: Mark Deuger, Tom Orcutt (Groton Water Dept.), John Petropoulos (BOS), Jay Prager, Arthur Prest (Finance Comm.), Michael Rosa

Absent: Susan Horowitz (BOH),

Recorder: Stephen Legge

Call to Order: Chairman Petropoulos called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

Committee Membership and Officers

Petropoulos stated he is hard pressed to continue as committee chair; he anticipates travel out of country, and believes the committee needs strong and involved management. Prest, retired, is willing to take on chairmanship. Rosa moved that Prest be elected chair; Prager seconded. Five voted in favor, Deuger abstained. Prest will take the chair at the next meeting.

It was noted that Deuger is Vice Chair and Rosa is responsible for proper handling of documents.

Prager announced he wishes to step down from the committee. He is leaving for the winter (December to April), and also has some personal concerns to contend with. Petropoulos commented that Prager's quantitative and analytical perspective over the last year brought great value to the committee. Prager asked permission to leave immediately, which was granted, and left at 7:00 PM.

Upcoming Town Meeting Article

\$17,000 in funds are presently available for paying future consultants. \$15,000 additional is proposed to be requested at Town Meeting. The BOS voted in favor of \$15,000. BOS also approved LLWAC's charter unanimously.

What can we say at Town Meeting to inspire a "Yes" vote for the funds? Rosa commented that earlier funds spent were not properly targeted to solve the problems at hand. We as a committee are now chastened, and wiser. (\$800,000 was spent earlier to support sewer studies).

Petropoulos amplified, saying, we found a solution before we defined the problem. We still need money now to proceed the right way. We will be very careful. We will explain the approach we intend to take. We will procure services the right way by using the EPA's (May 2013, 31 pages) guideline titled, "A Quick Guide to Developing Watershed Plans to restore and Protect Our Waters".

Deuger commented he is not in favor of asking for the additional money. The 1989 CEI study directed us toward external nutrient loading. Now we look at the issues as a watershed problem, as compared to a lake problem. Petropoulos said we spent money earlier, but it was not wasted. We need to step back now and better define the problem. It might be a good idea to hire a technical advisor for the committee to articulate and elaborate upon this theme of “What is the problem we are trying to solve?”

Prest remarked that the biggest issue is that the committee be credible. Committee members have good technical credentials.

Approach to Evaluating the Quality of Ground, Surface and Drinking Water

Deuger commented that the Quick Guide is not a panacea, but it is a decent approach, and approved by the US EPA and state. He added it is not rigid but rather an iterative process. Prest agreed it is a good framework. We need to look at what we know and what are the gaps in our knowledge. Also, present data refers to “lakes”; it needs to be expanded to refer to the “watershed”.

Deuger said that the Town of Ayer is using the Quick Guide approach for their five lakes.

There was some discussion of the NRWA’s efforts to monitor and collect data on streams and tributaries of the Nashua River watershed.

Petropoulos cautioned that we need to be sure to develop a fair and open procurement process.

LLWAC Objective:

Prest presented a slightly revised objective statement that eliminated redundancies in an earlier version thereby streamlining it:

“To quantitatively determine if there is a problem with the surface water quality, ground water quality and drinking water quality within the Lost Lake Watershed. If yes, determine the source and the proportional/relative contributions as well as the potential solutions and proportional benefits.” Rosa moved to approve the streamlined objectives, offered by Prest. Prest seconded; unanimously approved.

Review of Consolidated Issues List (compiled by Deuger)

See attached list of 13 items. Items 1-3 are tactics and solutions by wording.

Other Topics:

Prest offered a new document to the committee he found today and considers excellent, “Massachusetts Volunteer’s Guide for Surveying a Lake Watershed and Preparing an Action Plan”. This document was prepared 2001 by the Mass Department of Environmental

Protection, Bureau of Resource Protection, Office of Planning and Program Support, Outreach Services (56+ pages).

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Revisions were submitted for consideration in the draft meeting minutes for September 11, 2014, mostly by Prest. Rosa moved and Prest seconded that the minutes be approved as amended. Minutes were approved with four in favor, one abstaining (Orcutt, due to absence from the meeting).

**** The next meeting will be in two weeks on Thursday, October 9th ****

Adjournment:

Rosa moved to adjourn, Prest seconded. Unanimous agreement. The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 PM.

Lost Lake Watershed Issues/Problems/Concerns List
Lost Lake Watershed Advisory Committee
September 14, 2014

- Mandatory Title V Inspections of all systems in the LL watershed (hence every 3 or 5 years) in additions to the transfer of Real Estate.
- Require all private wells to be tested (standard tests) once every 3 or 5 years in addition to the transfer of Real Estate.
- Implement Land Use Controls for herbicides/pesticides/fertilizers within the LL watershed.
- Is there a current or pending problem with the water quality of Lost Lake?
 1. If yes:
 1. What are the sources and proportional contributions?
 2. What are the solutions and proportional benefits?
- Is there a current or pending problem with the groundwater in the LL Watershed?
 1. If yes:
 1. What are the sources and proportional contributions?
 2. What are the solutions and proportional benefits?
- Is there a threat to the drinking water supply at Whitney Well?
 1. If yes:
 1. What are the sources and proportional contributions?
 2. What are the solutions and proportional benefits?
- Characterize the performance of on-site wastewater treatment systems (septic systems) within the vicinity of Lost Lake/Knops Pond, and the associated sub-watersheds; determine their impacts on groundwater, and evaluate chemical and physical fate and transport mechanisms that control contaminant migration to surface water bodies.
- LLWAC adopt a Watershed Management Plan approach to address water quality issues throughout the Lost Lake Watershed in accordance with the Clean Water Act and Environmental Protection Agency and Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection guidance. (Guidance described in ‘A Quick Guide to Developing Watershed Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters’)
- Develop and inventory of potential point and non-point sources potentially impacting water quality in the Lost Lake/Knops Pond vicinity and within the associated sub-watersheds.
- Develop Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for surface water bodies throughout the Lost Lake Watershed.
- **People must be convinced that there is a problem before we start looking for the source of the problem:** As far as I can tell there never has been buy in by town residents, the entire LLSAC

or the LLWAC that there is a water quality problem in Lost Lake/Knops Pond that needs to be solved. For example: In the 2014 **LLSAC Final Report** it says: “The committee has also struggled with determining whether or not levels of constituents in the groundwater and lakes are problematic. Measured nitrate levels, for example, are quite low. Phosphate levels vary around the lake but it is not clear that they are at “problem” levels or if they have changed significantly in the past 25 years.” In addition the Warrant Articles for a sewer presented at the October 15, 2012 Fall Town Meeting failed because it was said at the meeting that the data analysis was incomplete and that the assignment of what was responsible for the purported problems was disputable in that 23 year old water sampling results were used without retesting the water. In addition people said that the existing data was not catastrophic and that it was not clear whether the purported problems were from septic system (e.g., 25%) or from the watershed (e.g., 75%). It was also said that we need comprehensive long term tests so that we can validate if there is a problem or not. The 2013 CEI study and report did not answer these questions. If the LLWAC doesn’t develop quantitative answers to these questions we will be spinning our wheels. Before we start looking for the source of the problems we must demonstrate analytically that there is a problem!

- **The focus must be on how the watershed is impacting Lost Lake and Knops Pond and drinking water:** As the charter for the LLWAC is currently written it says: “The main charge of the Committee will be to review and study all point and non-point discharges in the Lost Lake Watershed Area that have a direct impact on Lost Lake and Knops Pond.” Until now there was never a question about the water quality in the watershed per se. The question is and always has been what is the water quality in the lakes and if it isn’t good why? The original suggestion regarding “sewering” Lost Lake and Knops Pond (i.e., the “lakes”) started because some people believed that the existing septic systems around the lakes were polluting the lakes. This belief resulted in the Woodard & Curran study in 2008 and CEI study in 2013 and a proposal for how to sewer the lakes. The LLWAC charge is not to study the Lost Lake Watershed for the sake of studying the watershed outside of its impact on the surface water on Lost Lake and Knops Pond and surrounding wells. Let’s assume for the minute that we do extensive testing of the surface water quality in Lost Lake and Knops Pond and surrounding wells and the quantitative results show nothing of significance – that the water quality meets what industry experts believe to be a healthy lake that is not about go into eutrophication and that the drinking water is safe. Would we continue to study the Lost Lake watershed and if so why? The Lost Lake watershed is a 2870 acre sub-basin of a larger watershed. Should we therefore study the entire watershed or the other watersheds in Groton? The Finance Committee would never fund any of this nor would the Townspeople support this at a Town meeting! As far as I can tell no one outside the lakes per se has been complaining about the water quality in the watershed itself other than those who live on the lakes which as has been said are the sinks within the watershed.
- **The Emerging contaminants issue is a Town wide issue not a Lost Lake Watershed Advisory Committee issue or a Lost Lake Sewer Advisory Committee issue per se:** We found residual amounts of pharmaceuticals in Whitney Well and Baddacook Well and a few private wells but that does not mean that it is only the people in this area who are flushing drugs down the drain. This emerging contaminants issue is important for every person in the town to be aware of whether they are on septic systems, tight tanks or the sewer system. The sewer treatment plant does not

treat for emerging contaminants and therefore they end up in the ground water anyway. The Board of Health, Water Commission and Sewer Commission need to deal with this on a Town wide basis. This effort could entail direct mailings to everyone in Town, prominent display on the Town of Groton homepage, inserts in the water/sewer bills, newspaper articles, Talk-About Groton, Groton-online, the Groton Cable channel as well as education coming from other local organizations such as the NRWA. We could also setup more drug drop off locations in addition to the Police Station, CS and Rite-aid such as the fire station and perhaps even get other towns to join in. Unfortunately Consumer Reports and even the FDA still recommend flushing down the drain pharmaceuticals that are too dangerous to be kept around the house.