

Lost Lake Watershed Advisory Committee (LLWAC)

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

Meeting Minutes - October 16, 2014

At Town Hall

Present: Mark Deuger, Susan Horowitz BOH), Tom Orcutt (Groton Water Dept.), John Petropoulos (BOS), Arthur Prest (Finance Comm.)

Absent: Michael Rosa

Recorder: Stephen Legge

Guest: Alex Woodle

Call to Order: Chairman Prest called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

Upcoming Town Meeting Article

Discussion of Prest's plan for Town Meeting on October 20th (see Rev. 2.0 dated 10/15/2014). Art felt BOS may have some concerns that the committee is stepping backward by assuming there are no problems at the outset. Petropoulos asked, how will the committee arrive at the conclusion there is a problem to be addressed? He suggests Item 5 in the Plan Overview section which says interview expert consultants informally to determine issues impacting the watershed. Petropoulos argued that Item 7 is prescribing test methods. Shouldn't we rely on outside experts to tell us what tests and methods would be best? In the CEI case, we told them what to do, they did it and it was not helpful. Horowitz agrees with Petropoulos.

Deuger commented that some people in town don't believe there is a problem. He personally thinks there is a problem (Prest agrees). How can we overcome that? Deuger suggests we strengthen our technical and economic case, and do better PR and education of the affected parties. Don't shy away from making watershed residents uncomfortable if it is the truth. Deuger also commented there is too much emphasis on doing another study.

Petropoulos responded, "You did not convince Town Meeting there is a problem." Guest Alex Woodle commented that Dufresne-Henry did a very strong and detailed study with lots of data. Orcutt offered to find the study for the committee.

Orcutt suggested deleting Items 7 & 10 in the committee's plan overview. There was general agreement by the committee to take out Items 7 and 10 because they were too prescriptive and speculative.

Prest has a 4-5 slide presentation for the Town Meeting. Prest asked the committee to consider whether the committee should meet monthly or twice monthly after the Town meeting. Orcutt responded that we should continue to meet twice per month.

Continued General discussion of Technical Issues

Prest and Orcutt commented that some big farm owners in town have made major improvements in their methods for controlling phosphates. One has said he stopped using phosphates years ago, but finds they are still testing in his soil.

Prest offered the committee a document he wrote titled “Lost Lake & Knops Pond Situation Analysis” (12 pages). He thinks it will help the committee get up to speed, and he explained some of the findings. Orcutt suggested we should add information to this from the CEI study. Petropoulos said Prest’s work is a useful historical resource documenting what has happened previously. Deuger thinks the paper is good and that it will whet the appetite of consultants, without unduly influencing them.

Guest Woodle offered some parametric information on Lost Lake and Knops Pond. He suggested we think of Knops Pond as a big (deep) kettle, while Lost Lake is similar to a flat (shallow) pan. He says the big watershed input is to Lost Lake, not Knops Pond.

Deuger said he thinks the committee’s best purpose is to examine the hypothesis that nutrient loading to the lakes is tied to weed growth in the lakes.

General discussion of phosphates in the environment: Phosphates were eliminated from laundry detergents in the 1990’s. Phosphates were eliminated from dishwasher detergents in 2010. Phosphates were banned in agricultural fertilizers on January 1, 2014. But it will take some period of time, unknown to us, for the land (and water) to work off historical phosphate loads.

Horowitz asked, “Do we need a sewer?” There was spirited discussion. The question is, what percentage of loads in the lakes is due to septic systems, and maybe also which septic systems are the biggest contributors. Deuger said we need to bring the town along to an understanding of what the problem really is – otherwise there will be no agreement for expensive fixes.

Other Topics:

Petropoulos asked the committee to specifically define a charge for expert consultants as to what we want from them. He wants the committee to focus on this issue.

Prest wants the committee to discuss state TMDL standards for surface waters, particularly as they may apply to Lost Lake and Knops Pond. It will be a complicated technical issue. Our lakes are of relatively little consequence to state regulators since they are only a small headwater for one of many large watersheds in EPA Region 1. Prest offered a report, 15 years old, concerning Bare Hill Pond in Harvard, MA. A TMDL for this watershed was developed and approved by the state. It could be a good model for our work in Groton.

Orcutt left the meeting at 8:25 PM.

Deuger said watershed plans have basically two goals: 1) return “impaired” waterways to unimpaired status, and 2) prevent unimpaired waterways from going to impaired status.

Horowitz left the meeting at 8:28 PM.

Due to a loss of a quorum, the meeting was adjourned at 8:32 PM.

**** The next meeting will be next week on Thursday, October 23rd ****