

Charles River Dam Advisory Committee | Meeting #11

June 27, 2021 (Virtual)

Meeting Summary

This meeting summary was prepared by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), a nonprofit entity contracted by the Town of Natick to facilitate the Charles River Dam Advisory Committee process. This summary is not intended to be a meeting transcript. Rather, it focuses on the main points covered during the meeting.

MEETING IN BRIEF

The Charles River Dam Advisory Committee (AC) convened virtually for its eleventh meeting on Monday, June 27, 2022, to review and discuss preliminary spillway design analysis and financial impacts. Sixty-five people attended this meeting: 15 AC members, 2 invited presenters, 2 CBI project staff, and 46 interested members of the public. **The agenda, presentation slides and the recording of this meeting are available on the project's webpage: <http://natickma.gov/crdam>.**

NEXT STEPS

- The next Advisory Committee meeting will be Tuesday, July 19, from 4:00-6:30 PM ET and will be the first deliberation and decision-making meeting of the committee.
- Advisory Committee members are encouraged to share their outstanding questions with the Planning Team and engage with their neighbors, friends, and constituents in advance of deliberations.
- The Planning Team will expand FAQ to summarize learnings from meetings to-date and new technical work.
- The Planning Team will post the AC Meeting #11 recording and slides on the project webpage.

WELCOME & COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Ona Ferguson, CBI Facilitation Team, welcomed participants and reviewed the meeting agenda. AC members approved the meeting summary from their tenth meeting on June 14.

PRELIMINARY DESIGN OF SPILLWAY REMOVAL

William McDowell, Town Engineer, briefly introduced Michael Chelminski, PE, and Gordon Clark from Stantec, the engineering firm secured through the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) to conduct site reconnaissance and preliminary design of the spillway removal option for the Charles River Dam in South Natick. Mr. Chelminski and Mr. Clark shared an overview of Stantec's approach and a summary of their findings, highlighting that spillway removal is feasible from a technical and regulatory perspective and exploring key questions raised in previous committee meetings about what the depth, flow speed, width, and navigability of the river could look like if the spillway was removed. Stantec's key takeaways included that removing the spillway would result in changes, as the area would shift from a pond to a river; that the most significant changes would be observed in the Northern Impoundment Section; that elements of navigability would change and there is some uncertainty about what exactly it could look like; and that there is some additional data collection and analyses recommended to support further design of spillway removal, if that's the option the Town chooses. *The full presentation is available [here](#).*

Discussion

Key themes from AC member discussion included:

- **Sediment analysis:** Members raised questions about what Stantec found in their sediment analysis work, and Stantec emphasized that they conducted probing and transects, largely focused in the

northern impoundment section, and found no concerning amounts of contamination or toxicity in the sediment, aligned with GZA's previous findings. They noted that dams limit the transport of sediment downstream and provide a sink for finer material that is normally transported in a normal river. There may be an initial sediment management approach in a spillway removal scenario, which can be active, passive, or a blend.

- *Navigability and seasonality:* Multiple members commented on the potential navigability of this area if the spillway were removed, wanting to understand what water depths are necessary for navigation and if those depths would be attainable in different seasons. Stantec noted that for most paddling craft, six inches of water moving downstream would likely be adequate, but more water is desirable for paddling and moving upstream. If the spillway were removed and the impoundment area were to change to a river, rather than a pond, there would be more seasonal fluctuations of levels, like in other spots along the river. Members noted that this is a common occurrence along other parts of the river and is accommodated by putting in in different locations if water levels are very low in August-September. One member noted that the current conditions for paddling downstream of the dam are likely worsened by the dam, as it's starving the river for sediment and now allowing it to flow naturally over the apron following the spillway; removing the spillway would allow it to act like a natural river again, moving faster in the middle and starting to channel deeper.
- *Design considerations:* Members noted that there are different design considerations to meet community needs, like channeling the river at the site of the spillway removal to allow for a narrow, deeper channel to aid in navigability or adding in a riffle to include the sound of running water.
- *Feasibility:* A member noted that science supports that removing the spillway is a feasible option and not dangerous to abutters, residents, or paddlers. Another member emphasized that there is no end to the data that could be collected, and Stantec shared that there is enough information to make a decision for spillway removal, and additional information would be collected during a complete engineering design period.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS: COMPARING PROBABLE COSTS OF DAM REPAIR AND SPILLWAY REMOVAL

Jon Marshall, Deputy Town Administrator, presented updated financial impacts and probable cost information, building on estimates first presented in May 2021 with updated information from GZA, Stantec, and the Town Department of Public Works. He noted that park improvements can be recommended by the Advisory Committee for either option, would likely be similar in either scenario, and that the cost of park improvements are not included in this comparison of probable costs. Mr. Marshall shared a comparison of the one-time and operations and maintenance costs for both repair and removal scenarios over a 30-year time span, highlighting that one-time costs are estimated to be \$1,000,000 more expensive for dam repair, and operations and maintenance costs could be \$830,000 for dam repair (operations and maintenance costs would be \$0 for removal). He shared a list of potential outside funding sources that exist to support either dam repair or spillway removal, noting that more grant options exist to support spillway removal. He also shared a high-level overview of the project timing for design, permitting, and construction of either option, noting that both would take roughly 3 years to complete. *The full presentation is available [here](#).*

Discussion

Key themes from AC member discussion included:

- *Questions about dam repair elements:* Members raised questions about a few elements included in the dam repair cost estimates that increased from the 2019 GZA report, like lower gate reconstruction and the required construction of a new fish ladder. Town staff shared that the lower gate structure is not functional, as it has not been fixed in 90 years, and requires

replacement. The fish ladder is a requirement that will likely be raised during state and local permitting processes, as the existing fish ladder does not meet state regulations. Town staff also noted that they asked GZA to revisit their numbers, and the costs of many materials have increased since 2019.

- *Feasibility of winning grants:* A member asked Town staff about their confidence in receiving grants to do the work for either option, and staff responded that the scale of grants for spillway removal is much larger than for dam repair. There are two spillway removal grant options open now that would not require a match from the Town, whereas dam repair grant opportunities generally have lower award values. A few grant opportunities could be used for either dam repair or spillway removal, but those opportunities generally award more points for removal projects. The state and federal government opportunities are generally promoting the removal of dams.
- *Costs of permitting for spillway removal:* A member asked Town staff about their confidence in the cost estimate for permitting the spillway removal option, and staff shared confidence in Stantec's estimate, which was informed by their other dam removal projects.
- *Considering risk of unknown costs:* A member shared from their experiences as an engineering consultant that there is likely a higher risk of unanticipated costs arising from dam repair in the construction phase than from removal. Town staff emphasized that, until the project is permitted, there could be unknowns that will increase costs.
- *Additional information:* A member asked if the costs of managing invasive species could be included in these cost estimates, and a member asked for the cost estimates to be compared with a typical annual budget for capital projects as a reference point.
- *Designing a valuable space:* Members shared interests in making sure that this process and the Town invest in the future of this asset and community space. A member emphasized making any construction efficient by deciding now about what the Town wants to see along the shore in this area beyond repairing the dam or removing the spillway, in part to avoid multiple rounds of permitting. Town staff noted that the committee's recommendation to the Select Board could include details about needed park improvements or enhancements; designing park improvements will require more robust public engagement outside of this committee process. One member emphasized that it would be easier to advocate for greater investment in the surrounding park area for spillway removal, due to the lower cost of construction.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Below are verbal public comments shared live in the meeting. Additional public comments submitted in writing are captured in Appendix B.

- Edward Jordon: The impact of the removal of the spillway is more significant now than in prior discussions. Prior, it was stated the impact zone was up to the pedestrian bridge; now it's up to the Farm Street Bridge in Sherborn. Living in the southern impact zone, I can attest that kayakers, canoers, and motorboat operators enjoy the river all year and it's enjoyed by many. With the removal of the spillway, recreation will be affected. The pond is eliminated; the river becomes less significant in its depth, width, and speed. The river below the spillway will be what you will have above. I don't know anybody that enjoys boating in less than six inches of water upstream. Bridge scour, water tables, residents in multiple towns upstream and downstream will be affected. These river effects that were discussed today are from people who are in the business of dam removal. Forecasts are estimates, not actuals. Suspect the impact upstream and downstream will be more significant than what was discussed today, as for costs discussed, these costs are insignificant over multiple years. What wasn't considered was the financial liability associated with the removal of the spillway. My recommendation is don't make the South Natick falls a silent stream.

- Robert Kearns: I'm with the Charles River Watershed Association, and we've sent in comments about this project in support of the removal of the spillway. We still support spillway removal and restoration of the Charles River. We want to highlight, honor, and respect the wishes of the Natick Nipmuc and other Indigenous people who have said that they never wanted dams on the river, including this dam, and they would like the dam to be removed. We would like to support that as well for the health of the river.
- Brad Peterson: I found the Stantec presentation quite helpful. I think it's apparent that there's no magic, unique geological feature beneath the dam, and if we remove it, we're not going to have some rock waterfall. It will not look like the rapids on the Colorado River. It'll look like every other part of the Charles River that's now downstream of the dam and that's mostly a shallow, slow-moving, muddy creek, especially this time of year when the water levels are even lower. It doesn't look very attractive to me. We know what the spillway looks like today, we know what the pond behind it looks like today. Many in our neighborhood would say it looks quite beautiful; I think it would really be a shame to take it down. As a previous speaker mentioned, many of the experts invited to speak in front of the committee have dam removal as part of their professional remit. Stantec talked about being specifically attuned to dam removal. They basically just want to take down dams, wherever they are, and you know however beautiful they might be. That's understandable in the context of their organizational mission. It's important to remind ourselves that these groups don't explicitly weigh all the intangible stuff like beauty of the site or joy it brings in their decision-making process. People come to our spillway because it's beautiful. They take their wedding photos. That's not something these groups consider when they tell us that well you know water oxygen content might be slowly improved. I really hope that the board doesn't forget these real, intangible things that are not expressly qualified or quantified on a slide. I'm also disappointed that the Historic District Commission was not invited to speak. The Dam is part of the historic district, and they would have provided some contrast in these discussions.
- Des Roches: I agree with the gentleman before me and the first who spoke. To not weigh in on the beauty and the dam has been a destination for years and years for the Town, and it gives a character. To really change that, I'm deeply concerned by integrating in climate change with something like this. Stantec did not speak to that at all, I also. Clearly they are in the business of taking out dams. I live on the river where it splits from 16 on South Street, and it is a huge part of life here. There's now a bald eagle that goes up river fishing. I'm deeply concerned that it will become a brook with muddy banks. The wildlife here is growing, as opposed to the concern being that it will not continue to grow, the way it is. I think the point on invasives is very important, because I have land here on the river and the invasives are a full time job.
- Steve Dannin: My house was constructed in 1884 by Curtis Broad. It was known as his family house where he established the old town canoe and livery company, and there was actually a boat house in front of my house on the Charles since 1884. That meant people could come out to the South Natick Area and use their canoes all year round, especially in the summer, because of the existence of the dam. It would be a travesty not to be able to navigate this river, as has been done for many years. My home is in the Historic District Commission. I was not bothered by that when I purchased my home 10 years ago; I felt safe because of it. Changes could not be made to my neighborhood because of that. If changes are to be made to my home, it needs to be approved by the Historic District Commission and all areas visible by both Route 16 and the Charles River as a public way have to meet their requirements. It's a two-way street, it's a two-way river, and I hope it stays that way, so the beauty can be kept as it always has been.

- Jeffrey North: I'm the conservation chair at the Greater Boston Chapter of Trout Unlimited (GBTU). Trout Unlimited National was established in 1959, and we've got over 150,000 members and about 400 chapters in about 42 states. Our mission is to bring together diverse interests to care for and recover rivers and streams, so that the next generation can experience the joy of wild native trout and salmon. We do that by engaging with communities across the country and the work of repairing and renewing rivers and streams. Nationally we've seen improvements in river ecology, flood prevention, and community safety resulting from a great many of them will projects that we've been engaged in. Locally and, most recently, GBTU has worked on the removal of the Mill Pond Dam on Traphole Brook in Norwood, tributary to the Neponset River. GBTU has just about 1,000 members, many of whom live in this watershed. We support the removal of this dam/spillway and the restoration of the Charles River in the region. We would expect that this project would produce multiple benefits, ecological and recreational. We can't speak to public safety, not engineers, but removal of the dam should improve water quality in the Charles River and freeing the Charles at the South Natick Dam will lead to lower temperatures and higher dissolved oxygen levels as the water would flow more freely. And colder water with higher levels of oxygen is better for wild trout. Free movement of sediment in the restored river would improve the riverine bottom habitat for multiple fish species. Removal of this dam would connect two cold water streams and really enhance the flow of Charles River.
- Susan Blease: I also wanted to agree with Brad and Steve that there are intangible things that we could lose. I am in a Historic District, and I actually would like to invite anybody who would like to come and sit on my deck at 70 Elliot Street to look out at the beauty that I see now. I also say that there are the intangibles, such as reflections, traffic, parking, various things that are intangibles when we look at that river. People will not necessarily want to come and have wedding photographs looking out at parking, at big boardwalks. I agree the historic, whose history, how many generations back history of this river, keeping the place historic, keeping the conservation. Boardwalks and kayak racks is not part of this natural beauty. I thought we were trying to preserve the beauty, and the best way to preserve the visuals for the public, as well as for somebody like me as an abutter, the beauty will be really compromised in many, many ways. Mainly traffic, if you'd like to sit at rush hour morning or evening, you will see. Without the trees, the renditions are wonderful for the Seaport, but they are not a representation of this area of South Natick. The representation shows green grass and deciduous trees. This is not realistic to mowing lawns and watering it in droughts, maintaining boardwalks. It really is a fantasy to think that we're going to maintain the beauty as it's been for many years. I bought this house to retire in and look at this beauty, and the beauty will be destroyed with the maintenance of artificial things to try and keep this river and the spillway in place, thank you.
- Rick Devereaux: I am curious whether Stantec could comment on the number of spillway projects that have not been done, where people and communities have chosen not to do them and done other restoration work instead? What might have caused that decision? Also, I know it's not up to code and there may be implications and liabilities for this, but I'm curious what the downside of doing nothing is to the spillway and sort of a gradual collapse, whether that could be calamitous?
- Valerie (196 Eliot St): I think I'm in the Southern Impoundment Section, and right next to the Northern Impoundment Section, and I'm very troubled by a 3-5-foot drop in the river. We already have problems with invasive species. We have lots of wildlife, like herons. I would favor dam repair over spillway removal. The notion of decreasing the depth of the river and widening the amount of mudflats and mosquitos and everything else, I'm not in favor of. Why don't we ever get notice about these meetings?

- Sheldon: My concern is that the Northern Impoundment Section borders a popular recreational site that abuts the borders of the spillway. The proposed removal of the dam will increase the mosquito population. I feel like nobody addressed the recreational features that this park has to offer. I feel like if this spillway is removed, will it still be an attractive spot for people to go to relax by?
- Candy Hulton: I hear this dilemma between the people who are kayaking and the beauty of the river. People that are kayaking are primarily people that live locally, whereas the river and spillway, people are coming from all over for various reasons, like looking for calm and getting through Covid. This reaches a far greater group of people than us locally. I live right near the dam and I love it. I can't see any reason why we need to change it. We can manage what we have, why alter, do the minimum.
- Bev Rich: I haven't heard anyone address the ongoing liability of the Town if the repair is done, and the chances that the liability will take effect given unknowns of climate change. I also wanted to share my perspective as an abutter that although I'm an abutter and love the dam, I do feel like we are responsible for the environment and anything we can do to preserve and protect it. In addition, it sounded like, from the beginning, there may be significant liability for the Town if the dam is repaired and preserved.

CONCLUSION

Following public comments, Ona Ferguson, CBI Facilitation Team, reviewed a list of next steps and invited Advisory Committee members to share closing thoughts and reflections. One member, Jeannine Furrer, noted that her role on the committee is as the Historic District Commission representative and that the Historic District includes both parks on opposite sides of the spillway, including the earthen dam, but it does not include the spillway. She emphasized that the role of the Historic District Commission is to ensure that design changes remain relevant to the historic and cultural features of the area. She noted that the history of this part of Natick preceded the colonial period. Other members noted that in this process there have been both presentations by groups like Stantec with experience with spillway removal projects and presentations by other experts, like GZA, with experience with dam repair projects. Members noted that they are looking forward to deliberations and decision-making.

APPENDIX A: ATTENDANCE

Advisory Committee Members

Mike Balcom, Community Member
David Blease, Community Member
Dirk Coburn, Finance Committee Representative
Terri Evans, Planning Board Representative
Jeannine Furrer, Historic District Commission Representative
Martin Kessel, Community Member
Seth Levine, Recreation and Parks Commission Representative
David Lodding, Open Space Advisory Committee Representative
Jon Marshall, Deputy Town Administrator
William McDowell, Town Engineer
Claire Rundelli, Conservation Agent
Rebekah Stendahl, Community Member
Chris Stillman, Conservation Commission Representative
Jillian Wilson Martin, Sustainability Coordinator
Kristen Wyman, Indigenous Representative: Natick Nipmuc Indian Council

Project Staff

Ona Ferguson, CBI Facilitator
Maggie Osthues, CBI Facilitator

Invited Presenters

Michael Chelminski, PE, Stantec
Gordon Clark, Stantec

46 interested members of the public also attended the meeting.

APPENDIX B: WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

Town of Natick: Charles River Dam Advisory Committee
June 27, 2022, 4:00 - 6:30 PM ET Meeting
Written Public Comments

Nicholas, Angelique & Adeline Yoakum

June 24, 2022

Dear Maggie or To Whom It May Concern,

Hello, my name is Nick Yoakum and I live at 71 Eliot Street in South Natick with my wife and our daughter. We were so fortunate to have recently moved into this beautiful part of the world and I can certainly tell you the waterfall created by the South Natick Dam was certainly a selling point that brought us into the area. I'm drafting this email from our living room where we have an incredible view of the South Natick Dam and the aquatic paradise above it in which we can see a multitude of wildlife. We just had our first child and we love to show her the fish, the birds, the geese, and the swans that call the river home. She already seems to have the love of nature and respect for life that we harbor. Even the sound generated by the waterfall helps diminish the traffic noise and soothes our daughter. When we open the window our three month old can hear the waterfall from her nursery and is lulled to sleep at night.

The waterfall has always been drawing people into this area to gaze at its beauty. When my wife was just a child her parents brought her to the dam to see the waterfall and they have memories and the most stunning photographs of her enjoying the view of the waterfall not knowing we would be able to purchase a home here 30 years later. The first time I came here was in 2015 when my future-wife and I had one of our first paddle boarding dates above the South Natick Dam not knowing we would call it home seven years later.

Moving water, particularly the type that is rhythmical such as is created by our beloved dam and waterfall provide a sense of tranquility. I frequently see people taking a moment to stop and stare at the dam, seemingly transfixed by its beauty and motion. It's wonderful to see people finding moments of peace especially in turbid times such as these when the world seems to be so full of war, pandemics, economic crises, deteriorating mental health and heartache.

The dam provides a place for people to rest and renew themselves and to be more connected with nature. I constantly see people enjoying the dam and all that the area has to offer by fishing, kayaking, paddle boarding and eating lunch from the local Charles River Coffee Shop or Pizza at South Natick. I see loved ones with their families, fisherman teaching life lessons to their children, I've seen first dates and couples sitting on the bench who look like they've been together for 50 years. I've even seen weddings and family photos at the park. And all of these people come here to enjoy the serenity and picturesque landscape created by our dam. The Charles River has many dams, but none seem to equal our South Natick Dam which can be safely seen from nearly straight on directly adjacent to it.

We understand that the dam may need some maintenance or revision to protect those downstream but I implore that we do everything we can to preserve the South Natick Dam. It may have a significant cost to repair and maintain but as a tax-paying citizen of Natick, Massachusetts I believe these are the types of things that are worth paying for and I would be happy to be putting our money towards it. Please don't take away our beautiful South Natick Dam and Waterfall.

Thank you,

Nicholas, Angelique & Adeline Yoakum

Kyle Ondricek

June 24, 2022

Without a budget for a park....

We have some idea what we will get with repair (reduced trees, grass, riprap, a beautiful spillway, pond, and musical water flow).

There is a rendering, presented earlier in the process, that shows this.

We have very little idea what we might get with a breach (the existing trees and riprap, a mud flat and narrow river or a shallow wider river, a compromised spillway of unknown aesthetics and no musical water flow)

I'm concerned that the expectation of beauty has been planted with the renderings presented June 14, but they have no budget to carry them forward.

So, recommend repair or breach, but please ask for renderings that reflect the actual outcome as budgeted, and/or that action be taken only after a budget and visible outcomes are presented to the community.

Please don't alter this unique iconic area without addressing the visual aesthetic outcome.

Once again, thank you for your hard and thoughtful work.

Kyle Ondricek
20 Pleasant Street

John A Davidson

June 24, 2022

SUMMARY OF CONCERNS

Removal of the South Natick Dam:

1. Will destroy an iconic symbol – it is simply beautiful
2. May jeopardize the Elm Bank aquifer and downstream private drinking water supplies
3. May adversely impact downstream dams
4. May adversely impact downstream properties and structures – South Natick, Dover, Wellesley, Needham.
5. Downstream property values and tax revenues may be adversely impacted
6. May lead to long-term maintenance and monitoring costs
7. Since, the 1930's little to zero expense, to the best of my knowledge, has been incurred by taxpayers toward maintaining the existing South Natick Dam
8. Existing dam has, in general, limited the negative impact of heavy rains and flooding. I recall a period where approximately 9" of rain fell in the South Natick area with no flooding.

9. Never have personally incurred any financial loss or structural damage when the Charles River has flooded.
10. Short and long costs to remove the South Natick Dam may be far greater than the estimated replacement cost of \$1.8 million
11. "Towering Pine Trees", "Free-flowing river", "Fish can swim freely" are red herring statements. New trees can be planted in an appropriate location. Pine tree roots apparently are undermining the dam. To someone living downstream from the damn free-flowing and fish swimming freely means the river will be flowing in the back door and out the front door.
12. May result in costly litigation stalling the necessary upgrades to the existing dam
13. Folks living downstream from the dam should be directly involved in the decision. This does not seem to be happening
14. Are outside groups, not living along the Charles River in South Natick, Dover, Wellesley and Needham. pushing for the removal of the dam to benefit their agenda to the detriment of those living along the Charles River?
15. What are the ulterior objectives of the outside groups?
16. Are the outside groups using the dam removal for fundraising to support their organization and those working for the outside groups?
17. What are the criteria being used in the decision-making process?
18. What is the position of the Natick, Wellesley, Dover and Needham selectmen?
19. What is the position of those living downstream from the dam?

COMMENTS

Removal of the South Natick Dam is extremely concerning.

As a South Natick property owner, I strongly oppose the removal of the South Natick Dam.

my background

1. South Natick property owner since 1973 and a Wellesley property owner
2. Familiarity with the Charles River includes, for the past 59 years, rowing on the Charles River at Boston University, Union Boat Club and the Cambridge Boat Club. I was actively involved with the Head of the Charles Regatta during the 1st twenty-five years.
3. Awareness that dams can be essential and can lessen the negative impact of heavy rains and flooding
 1. Growing up in Belmont I recall Waltham constantly being flooded. This continued until the proper dam structures were constructed
 2. Charles River Lower Basic dam combined with pumps is essential to maintaining proper water
 1. Keeps Back Bay structures with wood structures wet preventing exposure to air and rot
 2. Prevent flooding in the Back Bay

Concerns:

1. Extremely adverse economic and quality of life impacts may result from the removal of the South Natick Dam due to increased flooding
2. Failure to remove dams downstream from the South Natick Dam logically will result in water regularly backing up into the South Natick area

Just an aside: Fisherman mentioned an illegal dam was built in the Dover area of the Charles River. That should be investigated.

3. South Natick Dam is one of the town's most iconic landmarks, the centerpiece of a picturesque and popular park. *Charlotte Diamant May 20, 2020*
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9cf25f7662c84d8aa6b4c5d1b1800542>
4. South Natick Dam was built in 1934. I do not recall the Town of Natick spending any money on maintaining the dam.
5. Senator David Walsh praised the new dam not only as an "outstanding example" of the vast benefits of the FERA program, but as a "national shrine". *Charlotte Diamant May 20, 2020*
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9cf25f7662c84d8aa6b4c5d1b1800542>

QUESTION: should the South Natick Dam be added to the National Register of Historic Places?

6. SEDIMENT REMOVAL & DISPOSAL- EOEEA
Nealy 100 years of sediment has accumulated in the South Natick Dam area. That sediment undoubtedly sits on top of sediment from previous dams going back to the 1700's

EOEEA - Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA), Riverways Program document entitled Dam Removal in Massachusetts – A Basic Guide for Project Proponents¹

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/dam-removal-and-the-wetlands-regulations/download>

7. SEDIMENT ISSUES:
 1. Toxic chemicals undoubtedly will be released with the removal of the South Natick Dam
 2. Toxic chemicals will undoubtedly infiltrate the Elm Bank Aquifer and downstream sources of drinking water.
 3. Contamination of the Elm Bank Reservoir may permanently destroy the aquifer as a source of drinking water.
 4. Elm Bank Aquifer is the primary source of Natick's drinking water.
 - i. 1986 Acts Chapter 624 gave Dover, Needham, Natick, & Wellesley (and only these 4 towns) the right to

withdraw water for public use from Elm Bank (Dover Board of Health Water Resources Study Committee)

5. What will be the cleanup cost and the cost for enhanced water supply monitoring compared to the cost to maintain the existing South Natick Dam?
6. Will the Elm Bank Aquifer become unusable due to the release of toxic chemicals?
7. Will downstream sources of drinking water become contaminated with the water becoming undrinkable?
8. Towns of Dover, Wellesley and Needham private drinking water supplies may be contaminated by the potential release of toxic chemicals. Those water supplies may be irretrievably damaged. Who will pay for that damage?
9. PLEASANT STREET BRIDGE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

ISSUE: will the Pleasant Street Bridge need to be rebuilt as a result of potentially increased water flow due to the South Natick Dam Removal?
10. Downstream Dams may be compromised with the removal of the South Natick Dam. This will require extensive engineering studies and potential dam reconstruction or removal
11. Elm Bank DCR ROADS may be negatively impacted by the water rise. Elm Bank property may periodically become unusable due to flooding.
12. Property values may drop.
13. Town of Natick should be responsible for any loss of property values. Town of Natick property tax revenue may be negatively impacted
14. Severely compromised structures may require the Town of Natick to compensate property owners for the full value and removal of the structures.
15. Litigation will likely occur between those negatively impacted and those advocating for the removal of the dam.
16. Dam removal apparently may require constant monitoring and maintenance costs.
*Please see EOEEA - Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA), Riverways Program document entitled Dam Removal in Massachusetts – A Basic Guide for Project Proponents*¹
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/dam-removal-and-the-wetlands-regulations/download>
17. Town Engineer William McDowell stressed the dam is rated by the state as being in “fair” condition, and a failure is unlikely.

18. \$1.8 million renovation project proposed for the 87-year-old dam. This seems to be a trivial amount to restore an iconic symbol that works well and requires minimal maintenance.

Best wishes

John A Davidson

Connie Dinning

June 25, 2022

As the process for deciding to repair the earthen dam or remove the spillway winds down, I would like to reiterate my strong preference for keeping the spillway. This is an iconic part of Natick, and one which is enjoyed by many people every single day. Please just visit several times to see how widely used and enjoyed this site is - primarily for the beauty and sound of the spillway.

Regards,
Connie Dinning

Robert McNitt

June 25, 2022

In keeping with the scenic beauty of south natick I urge you to seriously consider repairing the dam vs. total removal.

Robert McNitt
21 Dover road

Brad Peterson

June 25, 2022

Hello Maggie,

Thank you for your work with the Committee.

Please find attached a PDF I would like shared with the Committee.

Also, I have three questions:

1. The 22 Pleasant Street property adjacent to the dam owns all or part of the race way / canal from one side of the dam to the other. It was, presumably, the site of previous business that used the dam for hydroelectric purposes. What is the Town's legal obligation to maintain a hydraulic head (i.e. water difference) so the owners of that site might still use the race way for hydraulic

purposes? The owner of 22 Pleasant Street said they may be interested in doing so when they acquired the property last year. Has the Town talked to them on this subject?

2. In the conceptual drawings, the remove scenario had completely rebuilt the old stone wall on the North side. Was this intentional? Is this necessary?

3. The Dam is nearly 100 years old and is arguably historical. It is a listed feature in the protected John Eliot Historic District, which is on the National Registry of Historic Places. Why has the Committee not invited the Natick Historical Commission, nor anyone from the John Eliot Historic District Commission to present?

Thank you,

Brad Peterson