

POTTER HILL DAM INFORMATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

July 13, 2021

Ashaway Fire Station, 213 Main Street – 2nd Floor, Ashaway, RI 02804
6:00 P.M. Call to Order.

1. Attendance and meeting protocol – 5 minutes

Full committee was in attendance

Scott Bill Hirst attended for the first half

2. Review and accept the prior meeting minutes – 5 minutes

Accepted

3. Review the Well Survey mailing list and respondents if received – 45 Minutes

Updated list from Gina no updates

Finalize actions to improve responses

- *All houses within 2000 feet vs. 1000 ft*

- *Jim reached out to Lisa r.e. well survey list*

- *Lisa sent a radius map and the assessor's list which shows abutters who are within 2000 feet*

- *This list is what we can use to notify residents-178 people only*

- **FOLLOW UP with Lisa- for the 2000 ft map, we need any 2000 feet from any point on the river**

- **Jim will contact Lisa and work with her about this map and will contact Chip as needed**

4. Discuss flood risks – 15 minutes

- *Risk of failure is addressed in grant proposal*

5. DEM Risk Assessment – Chip

- *Jim will ask Hopkinton Town to ask the project team for the Feasibility Study on Removal of the Potter Hill Dam completed in 2015*

6. Continue to formalize what questions our committee has for the Town of Westerly on the Potter Hill Dam – 30 minutes

The committee moved to postpone this discussion to next week and focus on an update for the Town Council meeting on July 19th.I

7. Discuss next steps – 5 minutes

Next agenda: discuss the flyer, robocall, review the grant, continue to formalize questions

Council invite to attend July 19, 2021 Town Council Meeting

Potter Hill Dam Information Committee Update to the Hopkinton Town Council for Next Monday, July 19 Zoom Meeting:

What we have determined:

- *The Potter Hill Dam removal proposal will reduce the river depth 4.5 to 6 feet between the Potter Hill Dam and Route 3 Bridge, 3.5 to 4 feet from Route 3 to Polly Coon Bridge, and a 1.4 to 2.3 feet reduction above the Polly Coon Bridge*
- *52 acres of open water will be converted to marshy wetland and 2,001 acres of wetlands will be dewatered (2015 assessment by Decker)*
- *Forecasted depths are only showing averages and do not take into account any drought conditions which could lower the river even more*
- *The proposed water level reduction could be a serious impact to Hopkinton residents near the river with shallow wells. Cost for a driven well could be \$12,500 to \$20,000 or more*
- *There was a well survey by the Southern RI Conservation District, however, many surveys were addressed to the wrong post office, and also excluded many Hopkinton residents near the river*
- *The concerns with this dam removal project are extremely time sensitive as it is stated in the grant that final engineering, permitting, and construction will begin in in October of this year*
- *Public awareness regarding this project is very limited and many of those who were aware did not understand the full extent of the impact*
- *This committee is still gathering and reviewing information to understand more about this project that has been in progress for over 10 years*

Our position:

- *The POTTER HILL DAM INFORMATION COMMITTEE is in full agreement that the Potter Hill Dam removal should utilize a design that will NOT reduce the river level to avoid impact to wells*

- *We recommend that the Potter Hill Dam removal follows the same design as the Bradford and the Kenyon Dam removals, which were large dam removals on the Pawcatuck River that did not reduce water level*
- *We recommend an approach using the design of the Bradford and the Kenyon Dam removals to eliminate any well impact, improve fish passage, remove the risk of dam failure, and have no loss of wildlife habitat*

Our ask:

- *We would like the Town Council of Hopkinton to engage on behalf of the residents of Hopkinton with the Westerly Town Manager/Project Manager for the Removal of the Potter Hill Dam and strongly advocate for our position to employ an approach using a dam removal design as employed for the Bradford and Kenyon Dam removals that will:*
 1. ***most importantly***, *will have no impact on residents' well water*
 2. *Will improve fish passage*
 3. *Will remove the risk of dam failure*
 4. *Will have no loss of wildlife habitat*
- *We would like to increase Public awareness regarding the Potter Hill dam removal project and consider some of the following means to inform and educate our Hopkinton residents:*
 - *Town information webpage with links to the Westerly Potter Hill Dam removal project website*
 - *Direct mailing of an informational flyer*
 - *Social media outreach*
 - *Robocall to residents*
 - *Provide a town contact to be able to receive questions and address concerns for residents*