

Key Topics: Huron Avenue Sidewalk Presentation, Drought/Water Conservation Update, PFAS Update, and COVID-19 Update

CAMBRIDGE WATER BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

January 12, 2021

As a result of the Walter J. Sullivan Water Purification Facility being closed to the public due to COVID-19, this meeting is available virtually on Zoom. This meeting is being recorded.

This meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. at 250 Fresh Pond Parkway, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Those in attendance via *Zoom* were:

Cambridge Water Board (CWB): Ann Roosevelt, James Burruss, Kathleen Kelly, Mike McNeley and Jason Marshall

Cambridge Water Department (CWD): Sam Corda, Fred Centanni, Ed Dowling, Dave Kaplan, Jamie O'Connell, Mark Gallagher, and Linda Vierboom

Department of Public Works (DPW): Kathy Watkins, Kara Falise

A. MINUTES OF DECEMBER 15, 2020 MEETING

Ms. Kelly moved, and Mr. Marshall seconded the motion to approve the December 15, 2020 minutes as written. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

B. MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Huron Avenue Sidewalk Presentation by Kathy Watkins, DPW:

The Huron Avenue sidewalk presentation can be found by following the link below.

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/waterdepartment/waterboardminutes/20210112waterboardpresentationhuronavesidewalk.pdf>

The sidewalk design focus was on safe connections for people walking and biking along Huron Avenue to access Fresh Pond Reservation and Glacken Field. The construction is on-going; Fields to be playable April 30, 2021; Project to be completed by fall 2021; Schedule subject to weather and COVID-19.

Based on previous feedback from the Board there has been significant design progress in pushing the sidewalk off Reservation land. Design changes and accurate property line survey information has minimized the impact to the Reservation, resulting in needing under 550 square feet (sf) and identifying future potential offsets of de-paving to make up for and significantly exceed the 550sf of increased paving relating to this project.

The Water Department will maintain the path for winter use, eliminating/minimizing chlorides and salt.

Potential offsets to make up for the 550 square feet of paving within the Reservation:

- Pine Forest Path Phase 1- Reduce perimeter road width to uniform 12', add 3' of vegetation. Potential for 5,700 sf of de-paving
- Remove one of the three redundant sidewalks opposite the Sunoco gas station on Concord Avenue. Potential for 2,400 sf of de-paving.

The Community Process includes today's Waterboard Meeting, Fresh Pond Advisory Board meeting on January 29, 2021 and another Community Meeting scheduled for February.

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Rendition of the proposed bike lane and sidewalk for Huron Avenue

Questions/Comments: Ms. Kelly voiced her thank you to Ms. Watkins and her team for putting so much effort into the redesign. Ms. Kelly likes the idea of off sets. Ms. Kelly thinks it's a good plan with two-way bike facility within the existing Huron Avenue right-of-way.

Ms. Roosevelt is glad the surface is permeable and blends with color. She commends Ms. Watkins for going back and redoing the design. It's a great presentation and Ms. Roosevelt looks forward to having a discussion on the finer details. Mr. Marshall commented that, overall, it's fantastic and he appreciates the minimized encroachment on the Reservation. It meets the needs and accommodates multi-uses. Ms. Roosevelt wouldn't like to see trees along there and noted, historically it's been a meadow and there are very few meadows in Cambridge.

Identifying the property line was important, noted Ms. Kelly. She agrees with Ms. Roosevelt regarding trees. She has concern though, as people use the area, that they will be tempted to drop down into the reservation -going in at different points - and asked if some plantings, such as shrubs, could be added as indicators not to enter the reservation there. Mr. Kaplan said, as phase two of the Pine Forest restoration work, we are planning and looking at pathway connections; making an ADA compliant entrance to the reservation along Huron Avenue and discouraging use away from other entrances to reduce the footprint. Mr. Burruss thinks it's a remarkable job. Mr. McNeley, although seeing it the first time, is supportive of it. Ms. Roosevelt said the design satisfies so much of what we were worried about. The "goat" path will be removed and re-established with grass said Ms. Watkins.

Ms. Roosevelt moved, and Mr. Marshall seconded the motion that the Board appreciates your (DPWs) efforts to do what we asked and to minimize the impact of the Huron Avenue sidewalk on the Reservation and are very pleased with this rendering. The Board would like to state that the Huron Avenue sidewalk design meets our criteria and should go forward. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

The board would like to preserve the meadow. The board feels strongly that they do not support the addition of trees because of the character and historical value of the meadow. Ms. Watkin's will update the slide presentation to reflect this. All present were very happy that this project has come to a great compromise.

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Drought/Water Conservation Update: We gained almost 5 inches of rain during October, November and December 2020 and are heading in a good direction. This calendar year we are down 1” from the average. The US Drought Monitor indicates the drought is over for Massachusetts and most of New England, however the State of Massachusetts Drought Condition remains posted at Level One status (mild drought). We continue with our conservation efforts via tweets, bill inserts and webpage updates.

Water consumption continues to be in decline: Fiscal Year 20 water usage was 12.2 million gallons per day (MGD) (Down from 13.0 MGD) and calendar year 2020 water usage was 12.0 MGD.

Questions/Comments: Ms. Roosevelt wonders how much COVID-19 has to do with the downward water usage trend. The pandemic has resulted in less commercial/business usage. Ms. Roosevelt said we talked about getting better data and thinks once the pandemic is over, and we get back to normal, it would be a good idea to get population increase and water usage forecast data.

PFAS Update: Beginning January 1st, the City will be required to measure monthly for PFAS compounds in our finished water. The average PFAS test results to date are 16.8 ppt for the combination of the six PFAS. The PFAS Pilot Study is on-going and we continue to monitor raw and finished water.

Questions/Comments: Ms. Roosevelt asked if “averages” means that some PFAS test over 20ppt. Mr. Corda said the only time PFAS levels tested over for the 6 compounds was September 2019 at 20.1ppt.

PFAS is adsorbed onto the surface of the carbon and at some point, the surface will be used up as time goes on. The pilot testing will give us a good indication how long that takes and that timeframe will be the basis for changing out the carbon in the future.

It was noted by Ms. Roosevelt that the Fire Department trained, using firefighting foam at Fresh Pond within the old maintenance building; where there was a tower built to test for fire extinguishing capabilities. It was asked if this was a point of concern relating to PFAS. Mr. Dowling responded there is no increase in levels of PFAS near the shoreline in that area. Known training areas have been and will continue to be tested. Results to date indicate that there doesn't seem to be any difference near the former test site or at any other test location within Fresh Pond.

In general, Mr. Dowling states that there is no significant difference from one test location to another within our reservoir system, which includes Fresh Pond, Hobbs Brook and Stony Brook Reservoirs. In general, it seems to be in the groundwater.

Mr. McNeley appreciates the data transparency and said PFAS is in the Arctic Ocean. There are over 4,000 PFAS compounds. When asked if the granular activated carbon (GAC) could remove them, Mr. Dowling said, “That is how GAC works” it adsorbs PFAS to its surface. It should be noted that we currently test for 18 PFAS compounds.

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COVID-19 Update: Covid-19 is spiking. Staffing capacity has been reduced back to 25% attendance in City buildings. Most City buildings are closed to the public. City staff are working from home Friday's to reduce the spread of the virus. Disinfecting the plant and vehicles continues daily. Operations still on-going. There is a full disinfection of the building every Saturday. The City will let us know whether there will be any additional rollbacks or changes.

Questions/Comments: Ms. Roosevelt asked if there were any employee infections. Mr. Corda said that 3 employees out of 58 + employees, interns and co-ops) have been infected with the virus to date. Fortunately, because of the virus protocols in place this has had very little impact on the day-to-day operations of the Water Department.

It was noted that DPW is testing for the COVID-19 virus in the wastewater. This information can be found on their website, as well as, the MWRA website (on the sewer side).

C. OPERATIONS

Transmission and Distribution:

None

Watershed:

Questions/Comments: It was noted how much development is going on in Waltham & Weston. "Are we doing okay with monitoring that?" asked Ms. Roosevelt. Mr. Kaplan replied that most is re-development and the watershed division is staying on top of the applications.

Water Operations:

Questions/Comments: Ms. Roosevelt thinks the reduced water usage is because many people were away during the pandemic.

Engineering:

Questions/Comments: Continue to work on list of all lead service reports to make sure its accurate and up to date. This list is posted on our website. We have about 1,300 lead services remaining out of the original 11,000.

Business/Billing:

Questions/Comments: Water fund balance as of June 30, 2020 is \$12.22 million. At years end any excess funds are returned to the Water Fund. The staff are good stewards of the budget, said Mr. Corda. Revenues are currently down for FY21 and this will be challenging if the trend continues. This year we should be able to manage it but if revenues continue to fall beyond this fiscal year it will have a more serious impact.

D. ACTION ITEMS

None

E. MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

No Comments

F. NEW BUSINESS

None

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In Conclusion: Ms. Kelly asked, “When are we going to review the re-design for Little Fresh Pond?” In response, Mr. Kaplan said we are still trying to figure out priorities, but this will come to the board before we move forward with any design.

G. NEXT MEETING DATES/AGENDA – Meetings via Zoom

- February 9, 2021: Approved/Watershed Land Acquisition Planning
- March 9, 2021: Approved/TBD
- April 13, 2021: Approved/TBD
- May 11, 2021: TBA/TBD
- June 8, 2021: TBA/TBD

Mr. Marshall moved, and Mr. McNeley seconded the motion to adjourn the Zoom meeting at 6:20 pm. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.