

Town of Londonderry, Vermont
Williams Dam Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Monday, October 16, 2023
Twitchell Building-100 Old School Street, Londonderry, VT

Committee Members Present: Robert Forbes, Rachel Febbie, Richard Phelan, Paul Hendler, Jim Ameden

Selectboard Member: Tom Cavanagh

Planning Board Member: Heather Stephenson

1. The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm by Phelan.

2. Additions or Deletions to Agenda (1 VSA 312(d)(3)9A):

Added discussion around a Q/A email from Stephenson and D and K

3. Minutes were approved for the September 18, 2023 meeting.

4. Discussion started regarding the RFP the committee put out asking what would happen during a significant flood event if the Williams Dam was removed. Discussion spoke to the modeling done in the D and K Study showing a 10 year flood event and a 100 year flood event with or without the dam (in Appendix D of the study), and what difference there was. Forbes, Ameden, and Febbie agreed that the modeling of the 10 year flood and 100 year flood with the removal and without the removal look almost identical, but Hendler felt that there was a difference, but said, "it was difficult to tell how much". Forbes has some concern that the company, SLR, who responded to the RFP is more focused on Dam Removal, and that is not what the committee is looking for. Febbie spoke that her concern with removal is what happens with everyday flow, velocity, 5 years from now, heavy rains, etc. Phelan said, "the big question here is what happens if the dam is removed". Stephenson spoke to the scope of the RFP, and that we need to be careful of the questions we are asking because based on what SLR said there are things they will or will not do, and we don't want to pay for information we already have. Forbes suggested a meeting and a conversation with SLR before we move forward, and Ameden and Febbie agreed. Stephenson said the SLR did actually suggest a virtual meeting. Ameden stated that he thinks it's very important that we are getting different modeling than what D and K has already given us, and Phelan agreed 100%. Stephenson proposed the committee come up with a list of things that they are looking for that are different than what the town already has for information, and thinks we need to ask really good questions that pertain to what we are looking for. Forbes stated that he found it interesting that in the last study conducted by D and K for the town after this year's flood that D and K recognized that there isn't silt behind the gate, and furthermore they recommended fixing the gate so it was operational to deal with removing silt. Forbes talked further about understanding the ledge and the location in regards to the dam. The committee decided to schedule a zoom meeting with SLR as soon as possible to ask SLR further questions regarding the SLR response to the RFP.

5. Discussion on tourism was quick. Febbie stated that she constantly sees tourists at the Mill Pond, and has taken photos of tourists taking photos. Phelan said that he sees cars there all the time too. Stephenson feels that the Mill Pond is scenic, however it still would be scenic if the dam was gone. Forbes states, "that there is a historical perspective being that it is aesthetic, and it's a dam that's been there since the 1800, and just like any historical building that we have we preserve them for historical reasons, it's a fixture in the town and it's a piece in town." Hendler mentioned that he felt that the report "After the Flood" had some great ideas for aesthetics if the dam is removed.

6. Discussion moved to the Mill Pond, and how it is used as a resource for the fire department for fire safety. Ameden spoke to it as he is the Fire Chief in N. Londonderry. His first statement was that the Mill Pond is the main water supply for fire protection in our town of Londonderry. He expressed concern that there are multiple plans in the process to make the town bigger, have more business, more industry, and no one has come to the fire department, to a meeting, requested a meeting, or have asked what the potential effects would be of removal of the dam and Mill Pond. His concern also was that no one from D and K spoke with the fire department regarding the potential effects of removing the dam, and felt it was concerning because their study is the one everyone is basing their information from. He continued that after the D and K study was done he asked, "well what is the replacement for fire safety if the dam is taken out?". He was told hydrants in the rivers. Ameden then welcomed anyone to go look at the hydrant in the river in S. Londonderry right now, and said it is gone. He continued, "It was taken out in Irene as well as this year's flood--it's completely gone. Hydrants in rivers do not work." Stephenson asks, "if going to a fire scene are you always getting your water from the Mill Pond?" Ameden responded, "for anything in town, I have a whole pre plan for any incident in the town, that pre plan is based on that water supply because that is our main water supply. There is access to the river behind the plaza as part of the Act 250 permit but that access has never been plowed, never been sanded, and it hasn't been put back together since the flood, but that doesn't even matter anyways because the river isn't deep enough there to even provide close to the water that we get at the Mill Pond. Stephenson asked about private ponds. Ameden answered, "there are private ponds, and the problem with private ponds is they are private---they are not located on Rt. 11... they are located on driveways." He continued, "it is not an exact number but 80% to 90% of the structure fires are in the winter time (because they are related to heating problems), and most of them are between the hours midnight and 5 in the morning, if we have a snow storm it is not easy to get a fire truck into a driveway that probably is not plowed and sanded, Route 11 will probably be plowed and sanded." Phelan spoke up about South Londonderry getting a fire truck stuck in a snowstorm, and was not able to move the truck because the driveway was not plowed. Stephenson asks if the dam is removed is there a way that there could still be some water storage there, is that possible? Ameden and Phelan said it would need to be dredged, and do something to make it contain water. Phelan continued that you can not have a stream there you have to have some sort of ponding. Stephenson asked, "is the hydrant that is there now affected by the flooding?" Ameden answered, "that it hasn't been affected by any floods since it was put in in the 80's." Phelan said, "because you don't have running water pushing,

and rocks banging against the hydrant like what happened in S. Londonderry." Ameden moves conversation to silt. He says, "that's where the silt is, in the Mill Pond not behind the dam, there are no rocks there, in the river that's the problem even with a hard rain it moves the rocks around and takes out the pipe." Phelan doesn't believe South Londonderry even will put their river hydrant back in. Ameden continues, "I am going to have to come up with a plan and have something in place if there is a fire at this building or at this business or a fire at this part of town, I have to have a plan in place ahead of time. I am not going to depend on private ponds and hydrants in rivers, I can't because they are so unpredictable based on weather, access, etc. He continued talking about the difficulty of ponds being a primary water source to fight fires especially in the winter because they don't have hydrants and you have to cut holes in the ice to get a pump in there. Stephenson asked if there are any other ponds closed to the Mill Pond in the area that can be accessed like RT 11. Ameden answered, "not like RT 11, and not a paved highway." Febbie mentioned how Ameden spoke at a past meeting about having enough hose to run from the Mill Pond all the way to Village Market. Ameden said, "we can drop a hose in the Mill Pond and have a direct lay to any business in town (a pumper would be at the hydrant at Pond). Ameden says, "that pond saved the Butcher Shop", and "even if the hydrant fails the Mill Pond is so close to Rt 11 I could park 6 trucks up route 11 and they could all put a pipe into the mill pond." Stephenson asked, "could you do that in the river." Ameden said "it's not deep enough", and Phelan said, "it is difficult, and you can't get to the river like you can the Mill Pond." Forbes said, "even if it is deep enough, if you don't have good flow then you don't get enough water, you have storage in the Mill Pond." Ameden states, "so now knowing I don't have the storage or possibly will not have the storage I have to redo the whole pre plan, and it's going to come down to trucking water into town. It's going to be all our mutual aid departments around with big tanks". Phelan said, "they don't get here quickly". Ameden adds, "here's my other point, this is the life safety part of it, a fire doubles in size every minute. The butcher shop fire was upstairs, they had a smoker up there and it caught the walls on fire, as you can see the building was completely saved because we were able to get the water quickly and large amounts of water quickly. If we don't get water that quick or the amount of water that quick like I said that fire is going to double in size every minute." Ameden and Phelan continued on regarding just how long it takes to call in tankers from other towns, and how much bigger the fire will be by the time the tanker gets there. Ameden said, "you can't fight fires that way, I need to know what my sources are and how dependable they are. I can't depend on private ponds." Stephenson said, "she felt this was the most important consideration in all this." Phelan stated, "getting water on a fire here is a struggle and you don't want to lose your water fire protection". Ameden stated, "The Mill Pond has saved a house and business just in the last few years." They have also trucked water out of the mill pond to other places. Stephenson asked, "what if there is a drought?" Ameden said, "he has never not been to get water out of the Mill Pond. Even if it looks dry there is enough containment where the hydrant is." Conversation continues and Ameden goes on to say "this is not even fire safety, it is life safety." Stephenson asks, "are there no alternatives"? Ameden responds with "there definitely are, I just told you about them". Hendler shared that an option may be a holding tank, he said, "is it perfect?, is it as good as we have now?, no, but it is an alternative". Ameden asked Hendler, "how much does it hold?" He responded that he did not know, but assumed they could be designed for certain needs. Ameden said, "Just so you

have an idea, during a house fire we pump on average 1500 gallons a water per minute per pumper, you could have more than one pumper." As a comparison Forbes offers that septic tanks are generally 1000 gallons. Ameden says, "let's say we have 5 trucks pumping or maybe 6 or maybe more, 1000 to 2000 gallons a minute, a minute, so tell me what kind of holding tank you are you going to put in that is going to hold enough water to supply that fire scene, which could last up to 8 or 10 hours, if you do the math real quick -it's just not enough. Even if you do something like that, that's not enough to supply a fire that size that could potentially happen in that shopping center. We will have to truck in lots of water. Discussion continued regarding water supply, filling, dumping, tank size, portatanks, having to call in all resources, and just things honesty my minutes taking could not keep up with. Ameden pointed out there are things in the plaza that have potential for really big fires, chemicals such as hardware stores, propane at blue flame, gas stations, etc.

7. Stephenson went over the answers D and K provided to her in email.

Phelan moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Forbes, passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

The next regular meeting of the Williams Dam Advisory is scheduled for October 30, 2023 at the Londonderry Town Office.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rachel Febbie

Approved
Williams Dam Advisory Committee

Rich Phelan, Chair