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Karen Adelman-Foster Chairman
TOWN OF NATICK Board of Selectmen
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Dear Chairman Adelman-Foster

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 58 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
 - a) Growing up in Belmont I recall Waltham constantly being flooded. This continued until the proper dam structures were constructed
 - b) Charles River Lower Basic dam combined with pumps is essential to maintaining proper water
 - a. Keeps Back Bay structures with wood structures wet preventing exposure to air and rot
 - b. Prevent flooding in the Back Bay

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. May lead to long-term maintenance and monitoring costs
6. Since, the 1930's little to zero expense, to the best of my knowledge, has been incurred by taxpayer's toward maintaining the existing South Natick Dam
7. 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.

Never have personally incurred any financial loss or structural damage when the Charles River has flooded.

8. Short and long costs to remove the South Natick Dam may be far greater than the estimated replacement cost of \$1.8 million
9. “Towering Pine Trees” statement regarding the removal of the trees adjacent to the South Natick Dam is a red herring. New trees can be planted in an appropriate location. Pine tree roots apparently are undermining the dam.
10. May result in costly litigation stalling the necessary upgrades to the existing dam
11. Downstream property values and tax revenues may be adversely impacted

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:**
 - a. **Toxic chemicals** undoubtedly will be released with the removal of the South Natick Dam
 - b. **Toxic chemicals will undoubtedly infiltrate the Elm Bank Aquifer and downstream sources of drinking water.**

- c. Contamination of the Elm Bank Reservoir may permanently destroy the aquifer as a source of drinking water.
 - d. 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)
 - e. 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?
 - f. Will the Elm Bank Aquifer become unusable due to the release of toxic chemicals?
 - g. 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 Proponents¹
<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