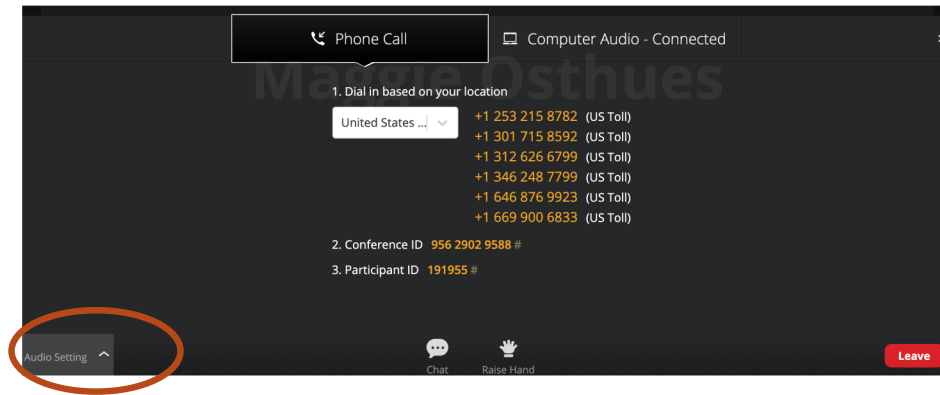


# Checklist for Attendees



**All attendees are automatically muted, with their video off.**

If you know you have less than optimal internet connection, please join the meeting via your computer for to view the screen and then opt to join via phone audio to listen.

Bring a tech-adaptive mindset!



Town of Natick  
**Charles River Dam Advisory Committee**

Meeting #2 | September 2, 2021

# Agenda

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- 4:00 Welcome, Overview & Introductions
- 4:15 Review & Discussion of Public Input
- 5:15 Discussion: What Values, Criteria or Principles Should the Advisory Committee Hold Close?
- 5:35 Review Draft Advisory Committee Work Plan
- 5:50 Wrap Up
- 6:00 Adjourn

*This meeting is being recorded.*

# Expectations

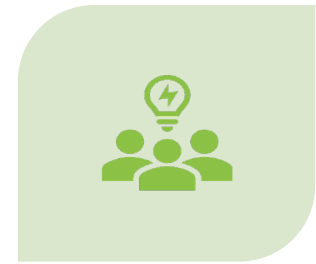
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BE CONCISE



BE RESPECTFUL



BE CONSTRUCTIVE

# COMMUNITY INPUT

What did we hear in our May & June 2021 outreach?

*Presented by Maggie Osthues, CBI facilitation team*

# How We Collected Input

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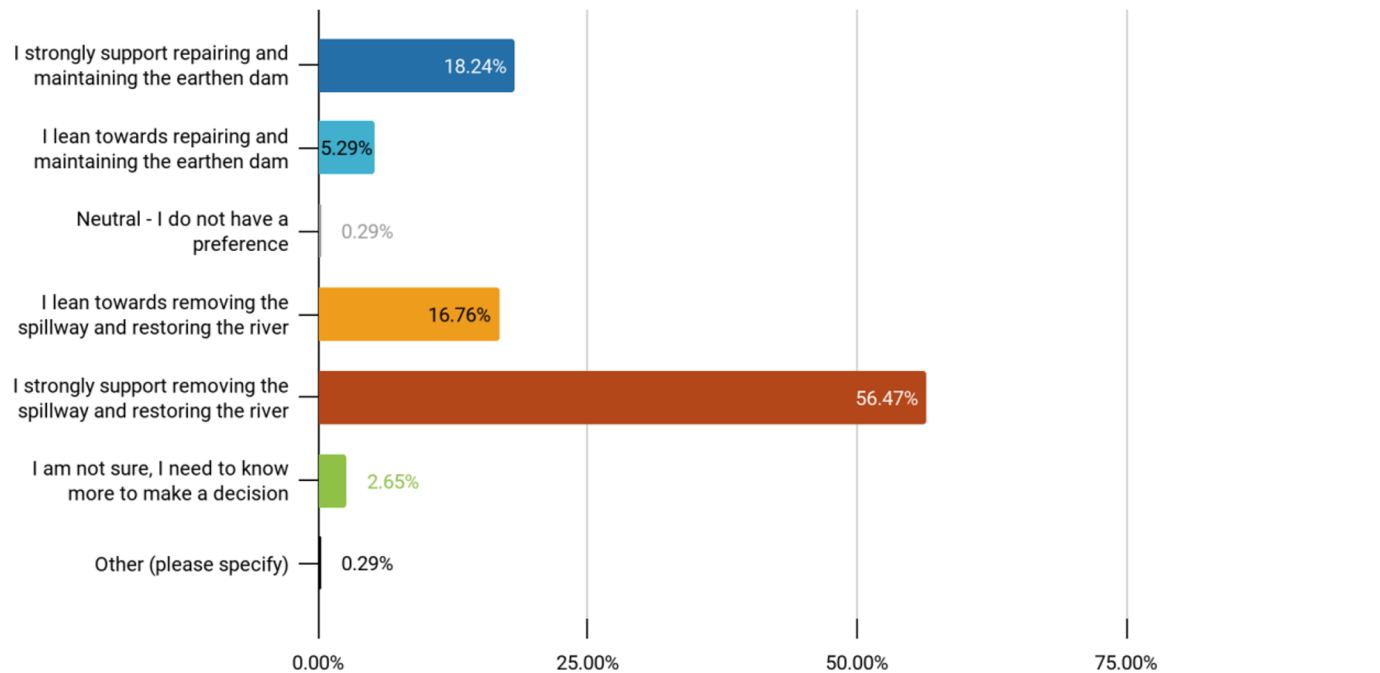
- **May 17 Public Information Session**, recorded and posted on project webpage
- **May 25 (6-8pm) & May 26 (12-2pm) Community Input Sessions**
- **Online survey**, open from May 21 - June 20
- **Engagement with 7th and 8th grade students** at Kennedy and Wilson Middle Schools
  - Students spent time learning about rivers, reviewed the project, hosted virtual Q&A sessions with the Advisory Committee, sent the Advisory Committee letters with recommendations, and/or completed the public input survey.
- **Additional written comments** from the public and neighboring towns

*Complete synthesis report available on Town's website, [here](#).*

# Snapshot: Survey Respondent Preferences

**Q: Given what you know today, if you had to make the choice for the Town, which statement resonates the most for you?**

*Of the 455 individuals who responded to the survey, 340 responded to this question.*



# Key Pros & Cons

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	Repair & Maintain the Earthen Dam	Remove the Concrete Spillway & Restore the River
<b>Beauty, History &amp; Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Maintain sights and sounds of the spillway</li> <li>● Preserve historic and iconic structure of the dam and impoundment area</li> <li>● <i>Eliminates trees</i></li> <li>● <i>Unsightly riprap</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pursue more natural beauty and preserve existing trees and character of earthen dam</li> <li>● Avoids riprap construction</li> <li>● <i>Loses impoundment area</i></li> <li>● <i>Concerns about aesthetic and smell of newly exposed land in phases of restoration</i></li> </ul>
<b>Ecology &amp; Hydrology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Eliminates existing and future trees</i></li> <li>● <i>Spillway continues to disrupt river ecosystem</i></li> <li>● <i>Greater potential for increased water temperatures and toxic algae blooms</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Creates opportunities for ecological restoration and improvements to natural habitat</li> <li>● Increases width of floodplain to help increase resilience</li> <li>● Reduces likelihood of future algae blooms during warm weather</li> <li>● Maintains carbon sequestration function of existing trees</li> <li>● <i>Cannot truly restore or “rewild” the Charles River</i></li> <li>● <i>Potential for invasive species on newly exposed land</i></li> <li>● <i>Concerns about river width, depth, and speed of flow during different seasons and conditions</i></li> </ul>



# Key Pros & Cons, cont.

	Repair & Maintain the Earthen Dam	Remove the Concrete Spillway & Restore the River
<b>Costs, Liability &amp; Risk</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Town remains liable for the dam</i></li> <li>● <i>Does not eliminate flood risk</i></li> <li>● <i>Higher initial and ongoing maintenance costs</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Eliminates Town's liability for ownership of operating dam</i></li> <li>● <i>Appears less costly in short- and long-term</i></li> <li>● <i>Potential need to armor/reinforce Pleasant St. Bridge</i></li> </ul>
<b>Recreation &amp; Community Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Maintains the impoundment area</i></li> <li>● <i>Maintains popular fishing site</i></li> <li>● <i>Potential that riprap could be a barrier to interacting with the river and wildlife</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Reduces need for portage</i></li> <li>● <i>Avoids riprap construction</i></li> <li>● <i>Loses the impoundment area</i></li> <li>● <i>Potential loss of south side access</i></li> </ul>

## Cross-Cutting Pros & Cons:

- Both help reduce risk of catastrophic dam failure
- Both allow for the creation of new open space or recreation opportunities for the community
- *Both require change for a beloved, iconic area close to the hearts of many Natick residents*

# Key Themes

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**This area is iconic and important to many.**

- Many have fond memories & personal ties to the dam
- This area has great natural beauty, history, serenity, and sense of home. It serves as a draw and gathering place in the community.
- People have different ideas about how to best preserve the iconic nature in face of certain change. Different elements hold different significance (e.g., the sound of the water over the spillway, the trees on the earthen dam, etc.).
- Some raised questions about whose history is represented in the dam and the importance of including Indigenous perspectives in deciding its future

# Key Themes, cont.

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**This process should look beyond Natick.**

- Decisions made in Natick about the dam will impact other areas along the river
- Case studies from other towns faced with a similar decision would be helpful

**This process needs to be thorough, clear, and transparent.**

- Many shared frustration or confusion regarding the Town's options
- Some have requested for additional technical review of the existing analysis (conducted by GZA) and presented options

# Key Themes, cont.

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**There is more for this Committee to learn, understand, and share about impacts for both options (hydrological, ecological, financial, recreational, liability, legal, etc.).**

Some commonly identified areas for more clarity, understanding, and exploration:

- Different phases of spillway removal and river restoration, including what abutters could expect
- More detailed financial comparison of both options and exploration of potential grant funding
- How the river's width, depth, and flow and sediment deposition could change with the spillway's removal
- Potential impacts to downstream properties under both options, especially the potential for flooding
- Legal rights and ownership questions regarding the existing dam as well as any newly exposed land under the spillway removal and river restoration option
- How climate change impacts should be considered, especially with regards to the Town's liability of operating the dam
- How existing recreation could be affected and potential ideas for improving future recreation

# Key Themes, cont.

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**Change may be difficult, frustrating, or unwanted – and it can also be an opportunity to create new, valuable community spaces.**

Many shared ideas or suggestions for what the Town could create in addition to addressing the future of the dam. Some examples:

- Could the existing spillway be decommissioned in a way that makes it a unique recreational resource?
- Could we arrange for a riverside walking path on the newly reclaimed land?
- Could a boat launch be integrated into the riprap?
- Could a footbridge be built across the river?

# Reflection

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What are your primary observations from the public input?

What themes jump out or resonate for you?

What do you take as key guidance for our work?

# VALUES, CRITERIA & PRINCIPLES

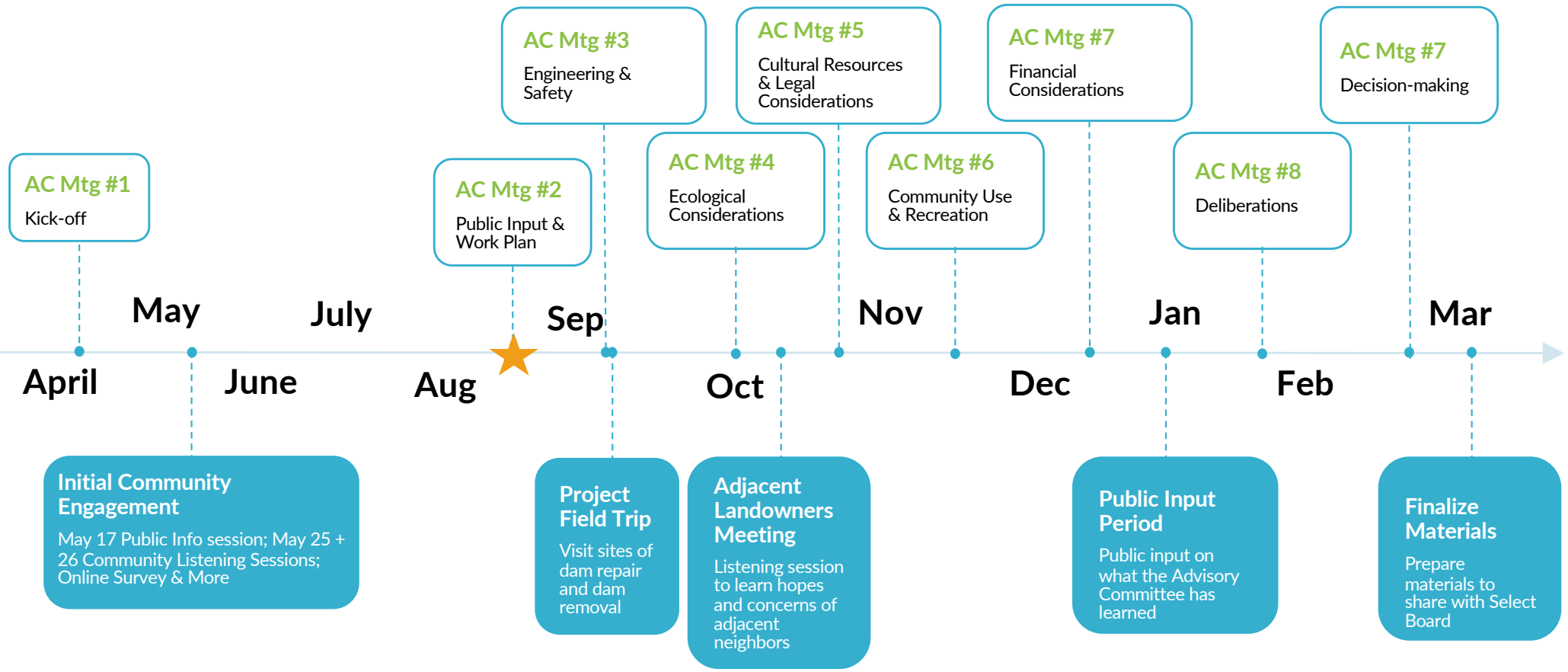
What should guide our recommendations?

# DRAFT WORK PLAN

How will we do our work together?



# Draft Work Plan



# Next Steps

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- Planning team
  - Revise work plan as needed
  - Share info on the first scheduled field trip
  - Guide GZA (presenters at next meeting) to address key safety and engineering questions
- Advisory Committee members
  - Send suggestions of presenters for upcoming meetings
- CBI
  - Schedule fall Advisory Committee meetings
  - Post meeting recording
  - Draft meeting summary
  - Write up any key draft materials from today's meeting

# Thank you

For more information on this project, please visit:

[natickma.gov/crdam](http://natickma.gov/crdam)