

MEMO

TO: Finance Committee

FROM: Jamie Errickson, Town Administrator

RE: Article 22 – South Natick Dam Mitigation Alternatives

DATE: September 9, 2021

This memorandum is provided to inform the Finance Committee of the Charles River Dam Advisory Committee's work is to explore the options of what could happen next to the Charles River Dam. Please note - this work is actively ongoing.

The approach of this work is outlined in the attached February 23, 2021 memo to the Select Board and has not changed significantly. That timeline is essentially on track, though the Advisory Committee's first post-public-input session was September 2 and we expect the Committee meetings to go into the new year. Sessions going forward will focus on learning together about key topics the committee wants to know about such as safety, flooding, ecological impacts, recreation, financial impacts and more. See the updated work plan [here](#).

We are pleased to have a strong and engaged committee of 20 members, including representation from a variety of important community stakeholder perspectives as well as key staff representation. See the member list [here](#).

Regarding the number of options that have been considered to date by consultants, the committee is currently exploring what is possible from a regulatory and physical perspective, as well as the feedback from the public throughout the process. There may need to be additional work to answer essential questions where the committee feels more analysis is needed. Funding is already available to support this work, which would be guided by the committee.

Town leadership and the planning team have also discussed the process to be considered for work to advance ideas from the community for what could happen with a redesign of the park complex adjacent to the Dam and determined that working on such a design would be premature, given the impacts on available park space from a potential dam project. Advancing such design work may also impact the work of the committee and input from the community on the project, as it may inadvertently lead to a perceived conclusion on what to do with the dam itself. As such, once a direction is solidified on the dam, then next steps would include looking at the park space with a trained landscape architect.

I want to note that the committee is made up of thoughtful community members who take seriously their responsibility to work together in a constructive, creative and diligent manner for the good of the larger community. My expectation is that they will explore all of the key essential questions and alternatives with the help of experts, and with the input from an engaged broader community to come up with a set of recommendations for the Town to consider.