

MEMO

To: Finance Committee

From: James Errickson, Town Administrator

Re: Article 29 - Natick Charles River Dam

Date: September 5, 2022

This memorandum is provided to inform the Finance Committee of the status of the Charles River Dam Advisory Committee's (CRDAC) work to explore options regarding the Charles River Dam and to outline a timeline for future action by Town Meeting.

The CRDAC was appointed in March 2021 by Interim Town Administrator, Robert Rooney to ensure "broad consultation and deep deliberation within the community to help inform the decision(s) the Town must make to address [sic] the deficiencies with the dam." The 18 members selected to serve on the CRDAC represent a variety of important and experienced community stakeholders, as well as town staff representation. See the full member list [here](#).

As part of its charge, the CRDAC was tasked with evaluating issues, outlining the numerous considerations, and providing a recommended path forward to the Select Board. Over the past 18 months, the CRDAC has met 14 times; gathered public input through extensive community outreach and surveys; engaged with numerous homeowners directly abutting the Charles River; received presentations from representatives of the Natick Nipmuc community; met with various experts in dam repair, removal, ecology and other areas; and pursued further technical analysis of issues identified by its members and the public related to this project. The CRDAC's work has been extensively documented and is all publicly available at natickma.gov/crdam.

In July 2022, 16 of the 18 members of the CRDAC shared their intent to recommend the removal of the dam's spillway and the restoration of the Charles River in South Natick. In September, the CRDAC is expected to finalize its recommendation and provide the Select Board with a report detailing its rationale. The Select Board will then review the CRDAC's recommendation and determine a path forward, targeting the 2023 Spring Annual Town Meeting for any necessary funding appropriation.

As the Finance Committee considers Article 29 of the 2022 Fall Annual Town Meeting Warrant, I would like to recognize the thoughtful leadership, transparent and inclusive process, and impressive work product of the CRDAC. Town Administration has received many compliments from the community for the CRDAC's extensive public engagement effort and detailed analysis of this important issue. The CRDAC's members have served Natick well, and I appreciate their commitment to the community and fully support the process and guidance they were appointed to complete. Supporting a motion to repair the dam at this stage, without providing the Select Board with the opportunity to receive a presentation from CRDAC or the necessary time to review the CRDAC's report, would, in my opinion, send a negative message to residents interested in volunteering for local boards and committees, and dishonor the 1.5 years' worth of work and dedication of the CRDAC to this important issue.