

Charles River Dam Advisory Committee | Meeting #12

July 19, 2021 (Virtual)

Meeting Summary

This meeting summary was prepared by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), a nonprofit entity contracted by the Town of Natick to facilitate the Charles River Dam Advisory Committee process. This summary is not intended to be a meeting transcript. Rather, it focuses on the main points covered during the meeting.

MEETING IN BRIEF

The Charles River Dam Advisory Committee (AC) convened virtually for its twelfth meeting on Tuesday, July 19, 2022, to hear final verbal public comments, reflect on community input since the last meeting, and begin its deliberation and development of a final report. One-hundred-twenty-eight people attended this meeting: 16 AC members, 3 Town and CBI project staff, and 109 interested members of the public. **The agenda, presentation slides and the recording of this meeting are available on the project's webpage: <http://natickma.gov/crdam>.**

NEXT STEPS

- The next Advisory Committee meeting will be Tuesday, July 26, from 4:00-6:30 PM ET.
- Volunteer Advisory Committee members will contribute to drafting efforts for a final report to the Select Board.
- The Planning Team will post the AC Meeting #12 recording and slides on the project webpage.

WELCOME & COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Ona Ferguson, CBI Facilitation Team, welcomed participants and reviewed the meeting agenda. AC members approved the meeting summary from their eleventh meeting on June 27.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There is significant interest by the public in this process and the decision that the Committee is working toward. 45 minutes were set aside at the beginning of this meeting for public comment so members of the public could share their thoughts before the committee began its deliberation. Twenty-five members of the public gave public comment in addition to those who had submitted their comments in writing. Committee members received 75 pages of written comment in advance of the meeting. The public comments included passionate, thoughtful messages both for spillway removal and for dam repair. See the detailed notes on the public comment period below.

REFLECTIONS FROM COMMITTEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

Committee members were invited to reflect on the written and verbal public comment, conversations they'd had in the community, and any discussions they had had with the boards or commissions they represent since the last meeting. Updates on interactions from the Open Space Advisory Committee, Conservation Commission, Historic District Commission, Planning Board and Sustainability Committee were shared. Of these groups, only the Recreation and Park Commission voted on what their representative should recommend (they voted to recommend removing the spillway). Separately, the Sustainability Committee submitted a letter supporting spillway removal.

A few Committee members shared thoughts. They overwhelmingly expressed deep appreciation for the members of the public who have shown up throughout this process in so many ways. Community

members have been thoughtful and helpful, sharing important questions, asking the Committee to explore various avenues of inquiry, and expressing their rationale and the outcome they would like to see. Committee members said they have listened hard throughout, and that it has been so helpful to hear the community's (varied, diverse) perspectives. They said they appreciate the respectful, thoughtful, discourse as an exemplary process, with different community members participating and weighing in when they are able and interested.

They noted that there is a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document on the project webpage put out by Town staff that answers many of the key questions the Committee and public have asked about (especially important as a few Committee members noted that some of the information the public is getting seems incomplete). They noted that this place won't be the same in either outcome.

COMMITTEE DELIBERATION

Prior to discussion, Ms. Ferguson briefly reviewed the role of the Advisory Committee, the structure of the Committee and Town's decision-making processes, and the values, criteria, and principles the Committee had previously determined to guide its work. Advisory Committee members then shared their view about whether the dam should be repaired or the spillway removed and the key elements and rationale that informed their decision.

Of the 17 members who were present, 15 members¹ expressed a preference for spillway removal. Each shared their rationale, and their points have been loosely grouped and summarized here, with those shared by the most Committee members toward the top. *[For a more complete description of the rationale underlying the perspectives of the Committee, please see the final report.]*

- ***It would improve the local ecosystem*** - Removing the spillway will have many environmental benefits; a healthier river is healthier for all species, including people. Removing the spillway will improve water quality, help mitigate toxic algal blooms resulting from the current dammed ecosystem, preserve the trees on the earthen dam, improve biodiversity, and improve the resilience of the area to a changing climate.
- ***It would improve and connect a larger ecosystem*** - Natick has a responsibility to remove the spillway to connect and contribute to a much larger river ecosystem that we rely on for health and wellbeing. Natick has a role to play in modeling spillway removal for other communities along the Charles River. While there are other dams on the river downstream now, those may come down in the future as well, opening up a healthier river ecosystem.
- ***It would honor the requests of past and present Indigenous people*** - In the 1700s, Natick Indians petitioned against dams on the Charles River that blocked fish passage and were ignored. Again in 2022, the Committee's Nipmuc representatives have asked the community to remove the dam. Being on the right side of history means Natick taking steps to right its past wrongs and remove the spillway, honoring the long-held view of the Nipmuc peoples. The Nipmuc see a long trajectory of the living systems of this area, and their wisdom teaches us to ensure future generations survive and thrive, which requires the removal of the spillway.
- ***It would cost less*** - The cost of spillway removal is lower than that of dam repair. Spillway removal would be more fiscally responsible for the Town, and a lower construction price tag leaves for money for the Town to invest in park design and maintenance for the surrounding area. There are also more opportunities for grant funding for spillway removal.
- ***It would remove Town liability*** - The existence of a dam makes the Town liable in the instance of a catastrophic dam failure. This is especially concerning given this is a High Hazard Dam, and we are experiencing more extreme weather more frequently due to climate change.

¹ Including one member who was not present but asked another committee member to read their remarks.

- ***It would increase navigability and safety*** -The existence of the dam makes this area not navigable and presents a safety risk to those recreating in the area. There is potential to engineer a channel in the spillway design phase to support on-river recreational interests.
- ***It would create a new, beautiful place to access the river*** -The greatest value of this area to the Natick community is the public access to the Charles River, rather than access to the built infrastructure within the river. A flowing river will create a new, more natural beauty. In drought conditions now, the view is of a piece of concrete in the river.
- ***The youth want the river restored*** - After a deep diver on the content and all the issues involved in this choice, younger Natick community members at Wilson Middle School unanimously favored spillway removal.

Two members expressed a preference for dam repair. Their rationale included:

- ***The value of this place for the community*** - The spillway and dam are well-acknowledged and valued public assets to the Town.
- ***It would maintain water levels for navigability*** - There is a legacy of paddling recreation in this area, and the ability to paddle above the spillway is something that Natick community members have indicated as a priority in surveys for this initiative and in other parks and open space initiatives in Natick. The engineering work of spillway design shows the potential for low seasonal water levels in the transition to a more naturally flowing river that may present a challenge for paddling here at certain times of year.

When considering what to include in the final report along with the Committee's decision and rationale, members emphasized that the final report to the Select Board must include a recommendation for an investment of Town resources to design and maintain this area for community use and recreation. Members also noted that any legal considerations related to private property will need to be directed to the Select Board and Town Administration, that the Massachusetts Historic Commission will need to review any work that requires state permits, and that the design process for spillway removal will include detailed environmental review, which should include additional planning around sediment. Members not in attendance will have an opportunity to share their preferences and rationale in the next meeting or in writing.

NEXT STEPS

With 15 members sharing a preference for spillway removal, the Advisory Committee reached its threshold for overwhelming agreement to develop a recommendation to the Select Board. The next Committee meeting on July 26 will focus on fleshing out the final report to the Select Board to capture the weight of the group's perspective on the final recommendation, including the key reasons why any who do not support the recommendation are not able/willing to sign on. Advisory Committee members Jeannine Furrer, Mike Balcom, and Dirk Coburn volunteered to help with drafting the final report. They will work to develop a report that as many members as possible can sign onto. Committee members will make their final decision on the final report.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Twenty-five people shared verbal public comments live in the meeting. Additional public comments submitted in writing in advance of the meeting are captured in Appendix B.

Robert Kearns: Climate Resilience Specialist with the Charles River Watershed Association, founded in 1965 to restore and protect the Charles River Watershed. I've been attending and listening to your meetings and really commend you all at the Committee for your thorough data and information-based

approach to this important issue. I've seen some comments in the public sphere about removal of the spillway I, that there would be a muddy creek or mud pit. I want to correct the record: The native seed bank and plants will revegetate the area and there can be plantings in the former land underwater within the impoundment area that would revegetate within months to a year. You can see this at dam removal sites up in Bellingham from 2017 and other places across the state. Additionally, about a month ago I paddled downstream and there are navigable parts of the river downstream that are free flowing. We're currently in a drought and there are some places where the river is really low, but that's not necessarily representative of the river at all times, especially in times of drought when it's extremely low like you see today. Removal of the spillway is the best option for the health of our river and for the wildlife and to preserve the 60 trees.

Ian Mevorach: Director of the Common Street Spiritual Center in Natick. I really want to thank the committee; this is a very complex issue, and I'm glad that so many people are here to offer comments. Myself and nine other clergy previously wrote a letter talking about why we feel removal of the spillway is the best option. We see many ethical concerns and important factors, among them the cost savings to the town if we choose removal, because the repair is so much more expensive and has future costs. Also, for the health of the river, what we're hearing from ecologists and environmental groups about how undamming the river helps the wildlife and helps the river ecology as a whole. Also an important point is how removing the spillway shows respect for the Natick Nipmuc and acknowledges their wisdom about the river being sacred and about the river having its own right to exist and not be obstructed or dammed. The fact that the Indigenous people, for many hundreds of years, have seen the river this way and didn't want it to be dammed presents an opportunity for our town to show respect and restore a relationship with the Nipmuc at the same time as we restore the river to a natural flow.

Candy Hulton: I just sent a late message with a picture of today's dam and the rock, which are all visible due to the low water flow. During this heatwave we see many rocks. That could be the level in August if we removed the dam. We would hear almost nothing, see some ripples, not have many people come see the beauty of the falls and rarely get the same amount of people not from Natick. This wish to repair the dam is more than for the people, from the people. It will not be for the fish until all the dams before Natick are removed. I urge everyone to vote to repair the dam. Keep the beauty and keep all the wonderful people that come to see something..

Brad Peterson: I've been very active with a local neighborhood group that generally advocates for repair, and the past couple of weeks we've done quite a bit of survey work to see how we collectively feel as a group. I sent those results in a PDF to all the committee members, but I just want to go through a couple of the highlights from our petition. We have over 1200 people that signed for repair over remove, with over 500 very heartfelt comments in the abutting neighborhood streets that we surveyed. 80 plus percent of those we talked to were for repair over remove. And of the visitors to the dam, we surveyed folks on a number of days; again 80 plus percent of the folks we talked with support repair over remove. And then, a majority of the town meeting members from precinct 10 that we reached out to support repair over remove (town meeting members not on the committee). I just want to highlight an email that I received from an ecologist that worked at Mass DEP and his concerns if the spillway were to be removed, on the downstream effect on water oxygen content and that the spillway itself, through aeration, may support an ecosystem that is dependent on it. The least that this group can do is to study, to do an O2 seasonal study above and beneath the dam and an animal study to really understand what it means, if it's removed.

John Mahoney: I'm in my fifth term on the Plymouth Select Board. 20 years ago in 2002 we removed the first dam on the coast of Massachusetts and, since then, on the same body of water, which is Town Brook, over the course of a mile we've removed four other dams. Two of them were about \$1.4 million projects

and the last one, the Holmes dam removal was about a \$6.8 million project, and I had the honor on Earth Day of speaking at that site with Charlie Baker. If any of you ever wanted to come down to Plymouth and see the before and after of a dam removal project, we're available to you. It is stunning in its beauty - I can't tell you enough that the option here is really removal, with respect to the economy, the environment and the finances of the town of Natick. You want to do the cheaper, short, immediate fix for the long term, which is removal; it's better for property values to go up, lower taxes, better quality of life, and you don't have to worry about certain failures of public safety and property losses downstream. A century ago, the Holmes dam in downtown Plymouth failed in 1906 and did irreparable damage. The government rebuilt the dam to stand there and do nothing for another century until we removed it. Jillian has my contact information if you'd have any questions anybody could reach out to me, but would love to see you guys remove the damn up there in Natick. It's certainly the best thing long term and short term for the community, thank you.

Richard Klug: Along with my wife, Kate, we live at 45 Water Street along the Charles River and directly downstream from the dam. I'd estimate we're roughly 1500 feet away from the dam, and for several years now, this dam has been deemed unsafe. We're all aware that extraordinary weather events, including very heavy and prolonged rain storms, are now commonplace everywhere on this earth. Those of us who live directly below the dam face the very real threat of a catastrophic dam failure and the sudden release of millions and millions of gallons of water could result in the destruction of our homes or even in the loss of life. I feel that the primary job of this committee (which I join the praise and the work of this committee I really think you've, let us have our voices be heard) - I feel like your job and the Select Board's job should be to ensure the safety of Natick residents. In the instance of the unthinkable happening, the town will be legally and financially responsible for any damages that occur. Kate and I love the spillway; we live so close that we walk by there many times a week. We enjoy its sights and sounds, but I'd ask everybody listening today to put yourself in our shoes and to consider what it feels like to live below a dam that's been ruled unsafe. That's why we believe that removal of the spillway is the most direct and cost effective step to take, thanks.

Robert Awkward: Town Meeting member in Precinct 10 and live downstream from the dam. The Charles River touches my property. First, I want to thank the time and effort of the committee - true democracy in action. If you go on the town of Natick government website and click on the first page. Like many sites, they have rotating photos and 4 of the 6 pictures are the spillway and pond. This site is the soundtrack of Natick for the entire town (like the new footpath), not just South Natick. It's an asset for the Town that contributes to the quality of life. I understand the costs for repair and removal are very close; neither costs take into account the aesthetic value that the spillway creates for everyone who goes there. Any time of day, there are always people there because of the aesthetic value. Current dam has been there for 100 years - this investment over 100 years is the right thing to do for our town.

Susan Blease: Thank you to the committee for all their hard work, including my husband. Signs that we find all around our property at 70 Eliot, looking out onto this beautiful setting where we want to retire, the signs say "We don't know what we've lost until we lose it." I know what we've lost. Either way it won't be what we bought or dreamed of. We all lose. I hear everyone who is fighting to keep the dam; I feel that removing the spillway is the lesser of two evils. The landscape architects' drawings with green grass raise concerns about what it will look like when there are water bans, when there are not funds to mow the grass, who will maintain and pay for it, and what kind of fertilizer will be used. If you are taking a senior picture or picture of your wedding, you will be looking at the trees. We currently have stagnant pools of smelly water because of the dam, and I would rather have rocks.

Bill Ramage: Thanking the committee for their hard work and hours of work spent consulting with experts and hearing testimony. Change is inevitable; whatever we decide will bring change in South

Natick. With climate change, the river could dry up or flood - we don't know. Whatever you decide, not everyone will be happy. Appreciate public service to do the best you can at this site. I advocate for removing the spillway and restoring the river to its original state for 3 main reasons: the economic reason has been mentioned, and the numbers are at least \$1M savings initially from removing the spillway and eliminating some maintenance and monitoring costs. There are environmental benefits to the fish and wildlife. Ethically, members of the Nipmuc Tribe have made their views known.

Aditya Acharya: I'm a Natick resident and student at Tufts University studying economics and environment economic studies. Definitely in favor of removing the spillway; a free flowing river is healthier for the species that live there and better water quality. Reason that I got back into this discussion was because I was at the farmers' market and saw a replica of a canoe on some stones, with the argument that, if we remove the spillway, water levels will decrease too much to go canoeing or kayaking. I looked further into the issue, and I think it's important to not be selective with the data that we are looking at - taking into account all the data that the Advisory Committee is putting together. Repairing the dam is going to constitute removing 60 trees, which is not a fairy tale in terms of the ecological progress that the town could be making. It's important to keep in mind perspectives of public safety, ethics, economic, environmental benefits. I'm an avid kayaker; some parts of the river will be more shallow or deep, and there will be differences in water levels, but it's not going to dry up like some are saying it will.

Rui Coelho: I am serving as current president of the Greater Boston Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Our national organization does support the removal of dams, and we have seen many positive impacts from doing that and not any of the negative impacts that I've heard on this call so far. We also support the removal of dams in Massachusetts and locally in our watersheds. We've had great success with the Red Brook Dam down in Plymouth. The removal there has restored the sea-run brook trout population, which made national news and a lot of state funding and money went into that and made it successful. I've also seen the results recently with our partner the Neponset River Watershed and the removal of the Mill Pond Dam on Traphole Brook. Within weeks of restoring the river after the dam removal, we have native brook trout moving back into the stream. We've seen all the health benefits for the water of dissolved oxygen, sediment reduction, algae bloom production. It also impacts climate resilience, when we have cooler water and not to mention the possible damage from floods that dams in this area over the history have resulted in five damaging floods and we definitely want to reduce that risk to the town and the people that live downstream. I heard some comments before and I do want to remind everyone that long before many of us on this call were here, the local Nipmuc Tribe really had rights to this river, and I do to support what Ian said that we need to be respectful of the people that occupied this property and this land before us and support their needs to return this to a river that is natural free flowing, unimpeded for migratory fish and the improved health habitats and they too would like to listen to the sounds of that river flowing the way it used to be, thank you for your time.

Jim Ostrow: We've heard a lot of arguments for removal of the dam - economical, financial, environmental. I don't think we should underestimate the homeowner who cited safety reasons and historical reasons, being respectful of Native peoples. I live on Phillips Street and am surrounded by "save the dam" signs. The only argument I can see for saving the dam is aesthetic, based on the idea that it's always been that way and it's beautiful. I would implore my neighbors to rethink that position. The idea that a natural flowing river is less aesthetically pleasing doesn't make any sense to me and I just think there's so many good reasons for removal of the dam that I actually am pleading with my neighbors to take down their signs and support those who have made wonderful arguments for removing the dam

and restoring the river to its natural state. I think it'll be wonderful to sit by that naturally flowing river and enjoy it.

Scott McCue: I live several miles downstream in Needham, but I serve as the Regional Director for Mass Audubon Metro West. In this capacity, I oversee Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary in Natick. Broadmoor is the single largest riverfront property upstream of the Charles River Dam; Mass Audubon one strongly supports removal of the spillway. Removal will restore healthy ecological processes and benefits include improvements in water quality and habitat. In a drought such as this, upstream water pools and stagnates; methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, can be released from the sediments on the river bottom and into the air. The warmer standing water upstream can also become a nursery for harmful algal blooms which threaten the health of humans and wildlife. Responsible municipal preparedness also compels removal, as global climate change is predicted to significantly increase flood events in the coming decades. Failure could inundate up to 150 properties downstream and cause up to \$600 million in damage. The long term costs of repairing and maintaining the existing structure far exceed those associated with this removal. There have been questions about the aesthetic implications of removal. In fact, echoing some prior comments, Natick's physical beauty is soundly aligned with ecological health and municipal preparedness. As comparable removals in the Shawsheen, Nashua, and Nissitissit rivers have shown, a former impoundment can be rapidly repopulated with native species such as buttonbush, sweet pepper bush, alders, and oaks. This restored wetland will serve as a gem in the heart of South Natick—one which will inspire coming generations with the beauty of the Charles River.

Will Friedland: Vice Chair of the Massachusetts Chapter of the Native Fish Coalition. We are a new 501c3 with chapters in 12 states, including Massachusetts. We strongly advocate for the removal of the Charles River Dam in South Natick for many reasons. There are at least 6 cold water streams in the Charles River Watershed, including 2 that are very close to the dam. One of those streams still has a small population of wild native brook trout; 20-30 years ago that population was much higher. Shrinking due to climate change and warmer water temperatures. Dam removal will greatly reduce the temperature in the main stem, and it is possible that these brook trout are going into the Charles River to eat before returning to spawn, so removal will make the main stem more habitable. It will also help with safety reasons. There are many other dams that need to be removed, but we can only do things one step at a time. Let's bring back the natural beauty and native species, restoring what existed before we came.

Catherine LeBlanc: I'm a member of the Massachusetts Sierra Club Forest Protection Team. I'm voting for removal of the spillway, restoration of the river, significantly preserving and protecting the trees on the earthen dam. The trees provide a tremendously critical role, and you can't plant a bunch of other trees in another area to equal what those trees do. I'm in favor of letting the river heal and also, as others have spoken, to help attempt to heal the Nipmuc relations.

Zev Hoover: I grew up and live in a house that I was born in on Glenwood Street just above the dam where the river and the surrounding woods were basically the backyard and playground that I grew up in and enjoyed. I understand arguments for keeping it for recreational reasons, but I really don't think that's true. The river downstream of the dam is fantastic and wonderful as well. I think when you title something "save the dam," that's attractive because people like saving things reflexively. I was in support of it too initially, but I think the dam is not like an ancient historic integral part of the Community, the river is. We should be doing the right thing for the health of the river, we should be saving the river, not the dam.

Tom Palmer: I've been enjoying the beauty of this dam since 1979, and we moved to Natick three years ago. I think we should keep it the way it is. There's beauty and aesthetic enjoyment and recreational

enjoyment there that I think it is hard to put a price on. Most of the river is free; there's very little left of our history, like this spillway and this dam. I have a list of the companies that have used water power there innovatively since 1864: Flacks leather, Edison Electric, Philip dooskin, Nathan Firestone, Eliot Mills, Indian Spinning Mills, Stewart Manufacturing, Codings Engineering. And then there's a current owner that bought it from Codings Engineering and that owner does still have riparian rights there. They wrote a letter on May 21 reinforcing the fact that they have riparian rights there, and may want to use them again and so that could be a significant cost. I would think that the town might have to pay them for those rights if they removed the dam, although they're not being used right now. I saw a boilerplate letter about and I've heard all of the wonderful language about removing the dam- making it clean, free flowing, climate resilient, the environmental thing, climate change, estimates of the catastrophic dam failure, and all. The town put these trees and and shouldn't have when the dam was built; I think the town should take them out. I think it's a beautiful asset to Natick and also the cost is very little different. I think it's worth it, and I think for all those reasons, and more, I think we should keep it.

Krysten Hartman: I represent 22 Pleasant Street, LLC, which owns 22 Pleasant Street by the dam. We are in support of repairing the dam. Thank you for the careful work that has gone into this issue. I'll be brief, as we have also submitted a letter in writing that was referenced. 22 Pleasant Street LLC recently acquired, refurbished and repaired the property after it was vacant for decades. As part of this work, we completed preliminary engineering studies, which confirmed hydro electric capabilities of this site. These capabilities are anticipated to be 201 kilowatts for 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This is an average due to seasonality of water levels, and the engineering study was completed by a firm that specializes in hydrotech, with a focus on river health, as maintaining the health of the river is a key priority for us as property owners. The hydroelectric capabilities of the site or key to the property's value, let alone being important in and of itself as a source of green energy. If the town were to decide to remove the dam, this would result in damages to this property. 22 Pleasant Street has long standing property rights to water upstream and downstream of the river. I am not sure if the town council is or was aware that these property rights exist, but they are a meaningful and important component to consider as a part of this matter.

Dominic Hall: I'm a town meeting member from precinct eight. I appreciate everybody's comments; I will say that I view this purely as a logical question in many ways. If you compare the two sides of the pros and cons for removing the spillway, the pros for removing the spillway logically outweigh the cons of removing the spillway. The cons being sentiment and aesthetics versus public safety, environmental, health and financial responsibility in terms of maintenance and even cost to the town. I actually think that this is a fairly straightforward logical pursuit for the town to take, not just for now, but also for the future of the community that we are trying to build. Logically, beyond all things, removing the spillway is clearly far and above the best option when people consider the environmental, physical, and financial health of our community.

Alison Field-Juma: I'm the Executive Director of OARS, the watershed organization for the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers. Natick is partly in our watershed but obviously this dam is not. I wanted to speak to just one aspect because it's something that we work on a lot, which is water quality. We do a lot of water quality monitoring and have done it for many years, and, as others have noted, dam removal restores the natural flow pattern of a river, and so it is healthier. So why is it healthier? It results in cleaner water, because the water won't be impounded by the dam and become stagnant. Without a dam, the water moves through the system more quickly. What do I mean by improved water quality? What it really comes down to, and other people have mentioned this, is cooler water temperatures in the summer. And that's important because fish and other aquatic life cannot survive hot water. It reduces biodiversity and ecological functions if aquatic life dies. It also stimulates the growth of algae including toxic cyanobacteria and invasive plants. They survive and reproduce faster in warmer water, and they

degrade the water and habitat and also the recreational opportunities. Also more aquatic weed growth leads to more organic sediment because the weeds die in the fall and that builds up and makes the water body increasingly shallow over the years and over fertilized. And, very importantly, cooler water means more dissolved oxygen in the water. Fish and other aquatic life need oxygen just like we do to survive, and that is a key feature of keeping aquatic systems healthy. Lastly, to restore continuity for fish and other aquatic organisms, because they need to be able to move freely to find refuge during droughts and food. We know summers are getting hotter, rainfall is getting more intense, droughts are getting deeper and we need to remove obstructions to these rivers because of climate change and to restore the aesthetic beauty of our rivers and the wildlife and the recreational values that they offer

Sara Hanna: I'm going to make it really brief because being this far down the list a lot of people have already made a lot of the points I wanted to make. One thing I did want to mention is a couple things regarding the downstream area of the dam. People say that it's very low, and so forth, I mean that's a drought condition that we are in right now. The presence or absence of the dam shouldn't make a big difference with that. Similarly, with the power usage at 22 Pleasant, because this is a run of the river dam, as opposed to a power dam, that should not affect their usage. So, for many reasons that have been mentioned by others, I am in favor of removal of the dam.

Diane Young: I live on Eliot Hill road. I grew up in North Natick. The spillway has been a part of my life for many, many years, and I don't think it matters where in Natick you live for how important that spot is to people's well being and in the community surrounding Natick. My recommendation would be to keep the spillway, but I feel like all of a sudden word is getting out about what's happening. I know you all have been working so hard on this, but we've been in a pandemic. People have not been made aware like they should be of what's happening and what could happen. I'm just talking with friends and they don't even know what's going on. Having a meeting today in the middle of July when vacations are happening at four o'clock in the afternoon when people are working or commuting home, on Zoom which some people just cannot do. I think all of that is not fair, I think that we need to postpone any kind of votes or decision making until the fall and give more people a chance to know what could possibly happen, what needs to happen, the pros and the cons. I really think that it needs to be reevaluated, this is not a time to be doing this right now in the middle of July, when people are so happy not to be stuck in their homes, nobody is going to be on zoom in the middle of July at four o'clock in the afternoon. Thank you for your hard work. I hope that you will reconsider and we'll have more opportunities to be heard in the fall.

Anne Geissler: I live at 100 Eliot Street in South Natick. Since this process started, I've done a lot of reading and it seems to me that the value of removing the spillway seems to consist of general talking points taken from narratives of dams that were removed elsewhere. We really don't have any real data about what will happen to the ecosystem here if this dam is removed because we know every river is different. One of the things I saw over and over again in my reading was that scientists say that engineers don't often think about sediment when they talk about removing a spillway. I'd like to know what's in the sediment that's trapped behind the dam. We know that Medfield State Hospital used the river as a dumpster for decades. If you think about the kinds of things hospitals dispose of - used dressings. IV bags. syringes. every kind of psychotropic drug, thorazine, lithium, antibiotics, steroids, hormones, the list is frightening. We know the disruption of the ecosystem will be devastating to the wildlife. As a wildlife rehabilitator and as somebody who's followed this, the latest information from Stantec is that the river's water level above the dam will drop. There is sludge, probably less than two feet below the river surface now that will all be exposed. Fish can't swim in mud, and a lot of the flora and fauna will succumb to this. There's no way around it, and in spite of the fact that, as I was saying, no one really knows what will happen, the engineers are pretty clear that the water level will drop, so we have to think about the ecological status quo. A dam has been in this spot for at least 300 years. In any event, the species that are here have acclimated, they've evolved, this is where they live, and this is where they will

not be able to survive if the dam comes down. The last thing I would like to say is that the Office of Dam Safety has said that if the trees came down, that would solve the problem. Why haven't the trees come down?

Aileen Zogby: I live on the South side of the dam off of Glen Street, and I enjoy crossing the bridge numerous times daily. When my children were young, we walked every day to the bridge and enjoyed the park. We've put in and pulled out our kayaks at the dam dozens of times. Additionally, my family are active members of the Eliot Church, which is right in the village and our congregation considers the riverbank at the park a sacred part of our congregation's history as a gathering place. It is a favorite and beloved place for all of us. I quickly wanted to applaud the committee for the year and a half of work dedicated to doing this hard work. You've been thoughtful, accessible, and transparent. There has been plenty of advance notice for everyone throughout this town to tune in, pay attention, and learn the pros and cons in a year and a half. I have attended all of these meetings, or else read the minutes and I do feel that I fully understand all sides of the arguments and I accept the facts. I don't love the choices here, but after carefully considering all of the facts, my family ultimately supports the choice that is, overall, the most prudent and the most beneficial for the macro environment, not just the option that is best for the humans who love the aesthetics of this spot. Therefore, I support removal, based on the judgment and recommendation of so many various experts in hydrology, ecology, dam restoration, wildlife conservancy. Further, my family elects to respect the clearly and long stated position of our local Nipmuc people. However, I believe that at present the town of Natick has no clear plan or budget to create a beautiful useful open access recreational park if dam removal is decided. This is really concerning. If the dam is removed, it will be essential to recreate and enhance this historical recreational resource for the region. I will hold our town officials to task to make an appropriate financial commitment to build a beautiful, accessible, sustainable, and culturally appropriate public parkland where this resource will continue to be enjoyed for centuries to come.

Christopher Borgatti: I work with Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, a conservation organization focused on public land, water and wildlife. I was born and raised in South Natick. I lived upon Bailey hill road overlooking the dam and the river. I spent nearly a part of every day in that river fishing. It led to a career in science and ultimately conservation, so this place is extraordinarily important to me. The organization I represent is in step with the other conservation organizations that spoke earlier in that we believe that the removal of the dam is a good path forward, given the ecological value the free flowing river through this stretch will provide connecting native species of fish, and also the free movement of sediment which, in the long run will benefit the system.

APPENDIX A: ATTENDANCE

Advisory Committee Members

Mike Balcom, Community Member
David Blease, Community Member
Dirk Coburn, Finance Committee Representative
Terri Evans, Planning Board Representative
Jeannine Furrer, Historic District Commission Representative
Martin Kessel, Community Member
Seth Levine, Recreation and Parks Commission Representative
David Lodding, Open Space Advisory Committee Representative
Jeremy Marsette, Director of Public Works
Jon Marshall, Deputy Town Administrator
William McDowell, Town Engineer
Claire Rundelli, Conservation Agent
Chris Stillman, Conservation Commission Representative
Jillian Wilson Martin, Sustainability Coordinator
Kristen Wyman, Indigenous Representative: Natick Nipmuc Indian Council
David Yancey, Indigenous Representative: Natick Nipmuc

Project & Town Staff

Jamie Errickson, Town Administrator
Ona Ferguson, CBI Facilitator
Maggie Osthues, CBI Facilitator

109 interested members of the public also attended the meeting.

APPENDIX B: WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

Town of Natick: Charles River Dam Advisory Committee
July 19, 2022, 4:00 - 7:00 PM ET Meeting
Advance Written Public Comments (*date: 18 July 2022*)

Elizabeth Montemayor

June 28, 2022

Dear Committee Members, I am writing to express my support for saving the South Natick Dam. To do so is an important investment in our community preservation now and for future generations. It is one of the prettiest places in town and in these tumultuous times, we all need and appreciate the serenity and beauty it adds to our community and lives.

My family and I moved to South Natick 12 years ago and were immediately charmed by the whole area including the park, Bacon Free Library, Charles River Coffee House, and most especially the dam and spillway that is its centerpiece.

Please take the long view and act as the responsible stewards you are entrusted to be for our Town.

Thank you,
Elizabeth Montemayor
169 Union Street

Breanne Sieurin

June 28, 2022

Hi -I know there is a comment period and while I do not feel the need to comment at a meeting, I would like to express that I am in favor of removing the dam. Based on what I have read, it is the fiscally responsible decision with positive impacts on the environment (wildlife, trees, etc.).

Thanks,
Breanne

Dave and Doreen Kelly

June 28, 2022

Greetings, This is Dave and Doreen Kelly at 74 Eliot Street. We are strong proponents of dam repair. Since the year 2000 we have been experiencing the benefits of the beautiful Charles. From canoeing to enjoying nature our family has been here since 1983 when my parents (Russell and Marjorie) bought the place. We have been good stewards of the area making sure to live within guidelines established by the Natick Historical Society for the John Eliot district.

We have logged in to webinars over the past year and feel strongly that dam repair is the way to go. It's scary to think what this area would look like following spillway removal. We think some of the conceptual plans shown during presentations are off the mark. Imagine riding a canoe during a dry spring or summer? It would not be possible.

During yesterday's Zoom call there was discussion about the possible need for a consultation with an arborist and tree specialist as part of spill way removal. As retired Americans it's hard to say where we'd get the money for such services if the town could not afford to pick up the tab.

Finally, we would like an update regarding ownership of the water rights by residents at 22 Pleasant St. This issue was raised during the December 14, 2021 meeting with no follow up.

Thank you for your kind attention to this email. If you have questions feel free to reply or give us a call at 508-650-4977.

Signed,
The Kellys

Janis Luedke
June 28, 2022

Hello, After reading your expose of the pros and cons of removing the dam, I say remove it. It sounds like, overall, that is the least intrusive thing to do for the environment around there. I haven't been to the dam in a long time, so I don't remember what's there, but possibly if there's room, you could expand the area into a pleasant sojourn for people to enjoy; ie. tables, chairs etc, maybe a place to play music.

Regards,
Janis

Laura Schreier
June 29, 2022

Restoring the river (as opposed to repairing the dam), is obviously the right financial and ecological decision. This has been clear for over a year now, and it's frankly baffling that we are still entertaining other options.

Taking endless hours to discuss and study this issue is a huge waste of time and resources. Please, let's end this and do the financially and environmentally responsible thing.

--Laura Schreier, Natick resident

Trese Ainsworth
June 30, 2022

Dear Charles River Advisory Committee, My name is Trese Ainsworth, and I live at 96 Eliot St in Natick. I have been following the proceedings of your committee with great interest, as one fortunate enough to live in close proximity to this beautiful place.

First, let me say how impressed I have been with your work and the process as a whole. I have found you to be thoughtful and attentive to multiple concerns, and no one can say this decision has been made lightly. In particular, the environmental impact, and the perspectives of our Nipmuc community members have carried a particular weight for me, and I am sure for the advisory committee as well.

That said, I sincerely hope that we can find a way forward that preserves this unique and beautiful landmark in some way that respects all perspectives. The Natick dam and waterfall (which is how most people think of it, rather than the less picturesque, though accurate "spillway") are one of our local treasures. It may be the most beautiful place in town.

We have a chance to make it even better-- more environmentally sustainable, more respectful of our history, and the central presence of the Nipmuc people, then and now.

It even seems that fewer trees would need to be removed than originally planned, which is all the more reason to try to find a solution based on common ground.

I know this will cost money. I feel confident that the community will contribute-- even if it means fundraising outside of the usual tax structure, as was recently done for the Natick Community Organic Farm. Most things that are valuable are worth that effort. I hope that we are not short-sighted, and do not lose this opportunity while we have it.

We can leave a beautiful landmark even better than we found it for future generations. Thank you for listening to my view, along with so many others who care deeply.

All the best,
Trese Ainsworth

John Kaufman

July 1, 2022

Yes my name is John Kaufman I am a lifelong Natick resident who has grown up around the Charles River in South Natick... I am extremely upset about the possible removal of the South Natick dam and hope the town will reconsider and keep the Dam as it is today with needed upgrades to the earthen section. I do believe that removal of the Dam could be detrimental to the Natick water supply which has a well pumping station and aquifer less than a mile down stream. The disturbing of sediments and contaminants that have accumulated over a century could possibly be disrupted and contaminate this well. Has this been considered? I believe not the agenda of certain groups nowadays seems to spearhead towards ecology and not common sense... The Dam has created a water park to so much wildlife... To think the river alone will sustain so much water fowl is absurd.

Having grown up around the river and stood at the dam in every seasonal element it has a very special aura.... To remove this so we can listen to the cars flying by would be so sad... But in the generation of ear buds I can see how this is being considered...

My vote is for keeping the South Natick dam

Thanks

Oren Frey
July 3, 2022

Hello, As someone who grew up in South Natick near the Charles River, has canoed extensively above and below the dam area, and still has strong ties to the area, I am writing to strongly encourage you to choose dam removal as the most logical and best option.

Removal is the economically more responsible and more sustainable option. River corridor restoration to a more natural state is the way things are going around the state and the country. It will help to continue the ecological renewal of the Charles, and will improve wildlife movement and fishing opportunities. It will also allow the river to more naturally absorb floods and changes in water level over the course of the year. Dam repair is just kicking the can down the road for what is an inevitable thing that will need to happen in the future.

Let's improve the river by letting it be a river, not "save a dam!" I don't believe the recreational opportunities will be compromised. The parklands will retain their beauty without being denuded of trees and, there will be plenty of space for everyone, and I don't think that shallow water is a navigation concern! I recently received an email from a pro-dam group suggesting that shallow water would be an impediment to boating. Personally, I would MUCH rather deal with some shallower water than a portage around an antiquated dam and spillway!!!!

That's all I have time for right now, but I really hope that the committee will make the right choice by choosing to remove the dam and restore the river corridor. There is tremendous educational opportunity to explain the process to the public in the parklands in the years during and following the transformation.

Let's not be afraid of change, but make the bold choice to remove an antiquated structure and let the river flow free!

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Oren Frey

Vicki and Bill Ten Eick
July 3, 2022

We are still for the natural river to return. Even if there will be shallow areas, let nature take its course. And thank you all who worked so diligently on this committee.

Vicki and Bill Ten Eick

Jamie Magee
July 5, 2022

I just wanted to let you know that I added a public folder of postcards that you might want to share with your committee. If they are in Natick Talks or Natick Past and Present, they may have seen it

already. If they do not have facebook, they can still be views in a web browser with the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/media/set?set=a.10160348598809479&type=3>

My posts to the groups began with this introduction:

Here are several postcard views of the South Natick Dam, Spillway/Falls and the Charles River, which I have thanks to dear "Uncle Larry" Branagan, who grew up beside the falls with his sister Alyce Branagan Fraser, the mother of my sister-in-law, Alison Fraser. I post these only to let all of us gaze with wonder at the great history of South Natick, not to endorse any future vision or any particular decision. What is certainly evident is that the area has changed over time, and will likely change again.

Captions may be edited as I find out more information. The back of each postcard has been added to each photo's comments. I will add more postcards as I find them, but here is all that I have found so far!

Sheila Pogarian

July 7, 2022

To Whom It May Concern, As a citizen and as an educator, I have been following this issue for the last two years. There is no reasonable reason to keep the spillway. After reviewing all the impacts; Flooding, Ecological, Financial, and Community Use, they all benefit from removing the spillway. In the spring of 2021 and 2022, I also presented this problem to my science classes. They also overwhelmingly came to the same conclusion. This is a chance for Natick to do the right thing for the environment while also saving money for the taxpayers. Remove the spillway.

Thank you for your consideration,
Sheila Pogarian

Richard Subber

July 8, 2022

I support removing the dam

Richard Subber
46 Union Street
Natick, MA

Erin Battat

July 8, 2022

As a resident of South Natick, I would like to express to the Charles River Dam Advisory Committee my firm conviction that the removal of the spillway is in the best interest of the community. I sympathize with town residents who hold strong emotional attachments to the dam

and are horrified at the idea of removing an iconic feature that brings beauty and a sense of place. However, I think current residents must take a long view, considering the cultural and ecological significance of the river to the indigenous inhabitants of Natick. The Nipmuc, or people of the fresh waters, saw the Quinobequin (Charles River) as the source of their identity, sustenance, and mobile lifeways. To them--and to those of us who are reckoning with the history of colonization--the dam disrupted their access to fish and other natural resources. While to some residents today the dam is an defining feature of the town, to others it symbolizes the forces of colonization that resulted in forced assimilation, dispossession, and genocide.

Even if removing the dam would cost more than repairing it, I would stand by this position - the extra expense would be worth this small act of reparation to the Nipmuc people. The fact that removal is significantly less expensive seals the deal. I hope the town will invest some of these savings into renovating the site in a way that recognizes and honors indigenous communities throughout Natick history--the harm done and their amazing resilience and cultural richness. I also hope the re-imagining of this space will allow a divided community to come together to create a new, shared sense of place.

Best,
Erin Battat
7 Rockwood Rd

Sofia Romero
July 10, 2022

To Whom It May Concern, I am writing regarding the Charles River dam & spillway project in Natick and to express my support for the removal of the dam and the restoration of the river to its natural state. I know that there is great attachment to how scenic the spot is, and I am sympathetic to this, but aesthetics and sentimentality cannot be the main driver for this decision. I believe that restoring the river to its natural state is the most environmentally and fiscally responsible option, and that the natural river will also be a beautiful spot. In addition, I believe it's important to honor that the Nipmuc Nation has expressed through its representatives that it supports the removal of the dam.

Best,
Sofia Romero
14 Lake St.
Natick, MA 01760

Joel and Penny Lewandowski
July 11, 2022

Please find attached a letter for the committee. Will this be distributed to the members and become part of the official record of data?

Thank you,
Joel and Penny Lewandowski **ATTACHMENT**

Adam Tierney-Eliot

July 12, 2022

Hello, I have recently noticed that most (but not all) of my neighbors have put up signs in favor of maintaining the spillway in South Natick. I reside at 16 Pleasant Street and my house appears on most of the conceptual plans. I have lived in this spot for 19 years.

While I will miss the spillway, I am actually in favor of removing it for the reasons most commonly stated (increasing biodiversity, respecting our Native American communities and relative cost). Whatever decision is finally settled on, there will be changes. I respect the position of those who wish to keep the spillway and remove the trees. However, I simply do not agree. I feel that returning the river as much as possible to its original natural flow is the right thing to do.

Sincerely,
Adam Tierney-Eliot

Matt Temple

July 12, 2022

I would like to add my voice to those who want to save Natick Dam. For most of its length, the Charles is hidden in people's backyards, or surrounded by trees. The damn site in South Natick is unique -- there the waterfall and the pond sare part of the community, a place of beauty, repose, and contemplation. Removing the dam will create just another ordinary vista. I have brought visiting friends and relatives to this spot for more and thirty years. I also understand that should the dam be removed, there is a multi-million dollar plan for creating a park -- my experience from looking at many towns is that these kinds of plans almost always fall victim to other town needs.

New England is hardly short of trees. Removing this dam will remove a unique spot, a place where people meet, to contemplate and enjoy what a river that is part of a community can be. Please do not destroy that.

Matt Temple

Nancy Quinlan

July 13, 2022

To Whom it concerns. I have given the dam question hours of contemplation for more than two years and I boiled it down to one question; if there never was a dam there, would we build one today? Of course not.

It goes against nearly every law and environmental regulation enacted in the past 100 years. There was a time for dam building but that has long passed. Please return this section of the river to the rightful inhabitants who struggle daily to get food and unpolluted water.

Best Wishes
Nancy Quinlan
31 water St
Natick

Valerie Pawson
July 13, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee Members: Given the very short public comment period at your zoom meetings, I decided to write you. We have lived on the banks of the Charles River for 30 years. Based on what I heard at the June 27 hearing, I think Stantec considers our property as being in the South Impoundment Zone. Typically from mid April through the end of October each year on sunny weekend days, we have canoeists and kayakers going by our property. The river is not deep so they have to navigate around rocks. This year with the drought in Massachusetts, we have seen little traffic on the river. I cannot imagine the river being navigatable with the water level drop Stantec predicted if the dam was removed.

The Charles River in Natick is beautiful. We and our friends have enjoyed canoe trips up river. It is beautiful and there is a lot of wildlife. Ducks, herons, hawks, turtles, swans, etc. can be seen. Rabbits, pheasants, and other wildlife use the river for water. I suspect even more wildlife use the Charles River as a water source as it flows through Broadmoor Audubon Sanctuary. What happens to all the wildlife if you recommend taking out the dam?

During the Covid pandemic and lockdown, we had a lot of people coming to our neighborhood to get outside, enjoy the beauty of nature and remove stress. Some things are without price.

We have had a dam on this portion of the Charles River since 1720. The current dam has lasted nearly 90 years. Surely, Natick can repair the dam to last at least another 90 years plus. Please do not destroy the beauty and all its benefits.

Lastly, despite being an abuttor on the river, my first notice that any of your meetings were being held and that dam removal was even being contemplated was in mid June 2022 from a neighbor who had just heard the news. I do not know what attempts you made to provide notice to the people your decision will impact, but no notice reached me or my neighbors.

Respectfully, Valerie Pawson

Mike
July 13, 2022

I'm a South Natick resident and strongly in favor of dam removal instead of repair.

Thank you,
Mike

(address redacted upon request)

John Schorske

July 13, 2022

I have shared my views before at a meeting, but will do so again in advance of a final decision being made on this project.

I continue to feel that removal of the dam is the best option for Natick, as well as the best option for the environment. I feel in this day and age environmental concerns have to be taken much more seriously, due to the spiralling nature of all the environmental issues we face as a global community. Wherever we have a chance to do the environment some good, we should take it! From the meetings I went to, the science seems to demonstrate pretty unambiguously that, as far as the environment is concerned, removal is a preferable option to repair. And I also feel, as someone who lives across the street from the dam, that there will continue to be an attractive recreational opportunity along the river at this spot.

Thanks!

John Schorske

Chris Lassonde

July 13, 2022

I am a resident of South St. I think the dam should be removed. If any questions please reach out.

Chris Lassonde

Jan Hastings

July 14, 2022

Hello, I've been led to understand that I can send a note about my opinion regarding the dam to this email address.

I would prefer the dam be demolished and the water returned to its original flow. Although I, like many, enjoy the sounds the water makes, I am appalled at the cost to keep the dam.

In addition, the damn, restored, after all that expense, does not actually seem to provide any relief from possible flooding.

If the damn is demolished, I understand it is the least expensive alternative and the area will still be beautiful and used for recreation.

I feel we have to be fiscally conservative, especially in these times where we do not know what will be happening to the economy in the next five years. I imagine we do not have the cash on hand to restore the dam and the interest rates are going up.

Thank you for reading my input.
All the best,

Jan Hastings
5 Chrysler Road
Apartment 414
Natick, MA 01760

John Moran
July 14, 2022

The dam has served it's purpose.
It's due time to remove and allow the river to be returned to it's original state.
Thank you
John Moran

Carri Gentler
July 14, 2022

I'm writing about the Natick Dam. I've seen signs around town wanting to save it. I know that minority is vocal, but the advisory committee did a good job of reaching out to residents. I am in support of removing the dam and restoring the river-- it would be good for the health of the river and fiscally wise during uncertain economic times. I know many Natick residents who feel the same.

Thank you,
Carrie

Mary Anne Gowen
July 14, 2022

My name is Mary Anne Gowen, and I live at 16 Eliot Street. I have lived or worked near the Charles River for my entire life. My family purchased a house at the end of Water Street when I was a small child. I remember flooding near that house following a hurricane. My parents sold that house and moved to Eliot Street (where I now reside.) I grew up and eventually moved to Boston and then Brookline and lived there for years while I was working in an administrative support role in the School of Engineering at MIT (next to the Charles River.) I eventually moved back to my family home and retired from MIT.

Thanks to the Dam Advisory Committee for all of your work over the past year or so. If you are aware of the 'Save the Dam' petition, you know that there are many many people who believe that removing the South Natick Dam would be a big mistake. As I write this message, I know there are almost 1,000 signatures on the petition, but there will be more by the time you read this.

I hope you will take into consideration the wishes of the residents of Natick to save the dam. This has been a lovely area which many residents have enjoyed.

I feel the Dam (removal) Committee has been addressing a scientific problem in a non-scientific manner. Questions have come up regarding the consequences of dam removal. What will happen to water levels? What will happen to homes and properties down stream from the dam? Will sediment flow down stream?

We have been told that the dam was not built to prevent flooding; however, there is no proof that it has not prevented some. Before you make a decision which will affect many properties in Natick and nearby towns I think you should find a disinterested scientist and pay him to conduct a study of consequences of removing the dam. There are faculty members in the MIT School of Engineering who might take on paid consulting jobs. MIT has a Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, and if you contact them, you might find an MIT faculty member who would agree to be a paid consultant regarding the consequences of removing this dam as we go into an era of global warming (and big storms.) It would be money well spent.

If you talk with long-term residents of Water, Lincoln, and River Streets, in Natick, you will hear stories about flooded basements following storms. In March of 2010 following a couple of days of very heavy rains, I had two feet of water in my basement (on Eliot Street.) I attach a photo. At the time, the Natick Fire Department helped pump out some of the water, but I have since had a sump pump installed.

I sincerely hope the town will decide to honor the wishes of the people and save and repair the South Natick Dam. Thank you for taking the time to read my comments.



Andrew Krotinger

July 14, 2022

My name is Andrew Krotinger and I live at 41 Pleasant Street. My law offices are at 6 Pleasant Street. I moved to South Natick in 1987, in part because of the beauty of Shaw Park and the waterfall. I moved my law offices there because of the falls; and as a Justice of the Peace have solemnized numerous weddings there.

I have tried to educate myself as best I can given the information so far available. I would only comment that more extensive studies relating to environmental impact are clearly needed prior to any final recommendation let alone decision is rendered. However, based on what we do have on the table, I can only say that I am strongly in favor of retention and repair of the dam and preservation of something I really cherish as an integral part of the neighborhood I love. I can tell you that virtually 100% of the people on my block feel the same. And the Committee should be aware of this overwhelming sentiment.

Gregory Dysart

July 14, 2022

I hope the committee decides to recommend for the town to remove the dam and the spillway to facilitate an improvement of the overall well being of the Charles River and its environs in our town.

Natick needs to engage in projects that improve our towns environment for the benefit of all of its wildlife inhabitants.

I look forward to the enjoyment of observing the river and its many creatures in a natural state.

Sincerely,
Gregory S Dysart
75 Oakland Street Ext
Natick MA 01760
508-572-0018

Diane Young

July 14, 2022

who have many questions about the removal of the spillway. I think that since we have been all in the middle of a pandemic for the last two years that many of us have been unaware of what is going on in about this issue.

Also, the fact that the Final meeting of the committee is scheduled for the middle of July when people are on vacation is not reasonable. Many people who are away will be unaware of the meeting or unable to log into Zoom.. Also, Many people are still at work or commuting home at 4:00 PM and unable to make this time.. or having dinner.. Meeting should begin at 7PM not end at 7PM.

I am requesting that the meeting scheduled for this Tuesday July 19th on Zoom be postponed until September. Also that is be held in person not just available on Zoom.. many people will not talk over Zoom and there shouldn't be a time limit on just 45 minutes for questions and answers.

This issue is HUGE for Natick and I don't know why there seems to be a rush about getting this meeting done next week.

I would like to have this email forwarded to all committee members. I would like to see the meeting postponed.. I don't think this is asking too much..

Thank you,
Diane Young
Life long resident of Natick

David Mogolov, on behalf of the Natick Sustainability Committee

July 14, 2022

On behalf of the Natick Sustainability Committee, I'm submitting the statement below for consideration by the Charles River Dam Advisory Committee. This letter was reviewed and endorsed by vote of the Sustainability Committee during our meeting on Tuesday, July 12.

Thank you,
David Mogolov
Natick Sustainability Committee

Natick Sustainability Committee Statement on the Future of the Charles River Dam

As the committee responsible for "evaluating Natick's environmental impacts, challenges and opportunities," we would like to offer our perspective for consideration by the Charles River Dam Advisory Committee in its final recommendation to the Select Board.

First, we appreciate the Advisory Committee's open and public process of discovery and deliberation. We've observed a commendable amount of public outreach and inclusion, including multiple surveys, 11 public meetings, and an FAQ drawing answers from across the Town's responsible employees, with evidence provided from studies and examination of other dam removals.

The potential removal of the dam is a complex issue, but we believe a compelling base of facts has emerged that should guide the Advisory Committee's final recommendation:

- In accordance with the Commonwealth's unambiguous "no trees on dams" policy, any restoration or repair of the spillway will lead to the removal of 60+ mature trees
 - Any reduction of the tree canopy in Natick contributes to the temperature increases
 - Natick is actively pursuing an increase in our tree canopy to address surface-level temperature hotspots; removal of mature trees is a setback to this goal
 - Removal of trees reduces natural carbon sequestration and releases stored carbon
- Evidence to date shows only positive environmental impacts from spillway removal on the health of the river; in particular, we note the October 12, 2021 letter from the Charles River Watershed Association, and the October 14, 2021 meeting on ecological impacts, which highlight:
 - The multiple negative impacts of dams on water quality

- The improvements that dam removals have in restoring a healthy river ecosystem, including allowing for natural sediment dispersal, reducing toxic algae blooms and improving seasonal migration of fish populations
- Evidence to date suggests that spillway removal—though it will change existing water depths and could lead to more noticeable, seasonal variations in water levels near the dam site—will, on balance, provide additional opportunities for public access to and engagement with the Charles River for recreational purposes, enabling residents greater benefit from our natural resources
- Repair of the spillway will require additional future investment in spillway maintenance

Additionally, many of us on the Committee felt very moved by the perspective and request of the Indigenous population, and by the clergy letter expressing support for that request. We favor considering their request as a factor in the evaluation, and note that the presentation on November 9, 2021 by Kristen Wyman and David Yancey showed that the Nipmuc perspective on the restoration of natural ecological processes, and on our human interdependence with our local environment, are very much aligned with the outcomes we expect were the spillway to be removed.

As the Committee charged with a focus on public environmental stewardship, these are the factors we suggest the Advisory Committee consider in final deliberation and recommendations to the Select Board.

Thank you,
Natick Sustainability Committee

Sara R. Hanna
July 14, 2022

Dear Members of the Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, I offer the following comments concerning the future of the Charles River Dam in South Natick:

While I have always loved the beauty of the spillway and the pond, I believe that removal of the spillway is the prudent course of action, difficult as it may be to see changes made. Most of my reasons have been well expressed by others: ecological benefits; removal of a potential source of liability for the Town; honoring Indigenous heritage; preservation of several dozen mature trees; and cost savings. However, I have one comment that I have not heard mentioned by others. One of the costs of keeping the dam is ongoing inspections, operations, and maintenance (O&M). As one who spent my entire career (I am now retired) in an environmentally-related field, it has been my experience that compliance with environmental regulations does not become easier or cheaper over time. Although one can only project O&M costs based on what is known today, I believe the Committee should keep in mind that these costs may well rise due to the imposition of additional requirements; they are unlikely to decrease due to a relaxation of requirements. Thank you for your many hours of diligent work reviewing information about the Charles River Dam.

Very truly yours,
Sara R. Hanna, Hydrogeologist

37 Oakland St. Ext., Natick

Steve Dannin, on behalf of Phillips Pond Homes Association Community

July 14, 2022

Attached please find a letter from the Phillips Pond Homes Association Community to the Committee for presentation to them.

Steven A. Dannin, PCAM **ATTACHMENT**

Joshua Ostroff

July 14, 2022

Dear Members of the Charles River Dam Advisory Committee: Thank you for your service to the community. As a fellow volunteer, I applaud your contributions, and that of staff, consultants, and community stakeholders.

I am writing solely on my own behalf.

I prefer spillway removal and restoration of the river, giving the most weight to ecological and other supporting arguments.

I respect the strong attachments to the iconic setting that has been enjoyed for generations, and I look forward to the eventual engineering phase of whatever is ultimately voted and funded to help us develop the best possible plans for generations to come. This moment in history confers a great obligation to honor a treasured legacy.

I have every confidence that your advisory recommendation to the Select Board will be guided by what you as committee members think is right, while factoring the historic, cultural, environmental, political and other aspects of this process. Thank you for your thoughtful work, and for your consideration.

Very best wishes,
Joshua Ostroff
18 Erlandson Road
508 654-3330

Anne Grady

July 15, 2022

I agree with Eco-Natick:

RESTORE THE RIVER - 3 BIG REASONS

Economics - It will cost Natick \$1,000,000 more to rebuild the dam (plus ongoing maintenance costs) than it will cost to remove it.

Environment - All studies completed by paid experts conclude that the river plant and animal populations improve with dam removal.

Ethics - The Indigenous community has asked that the dam be removed. Honoring their intentions is a way of rebuilding trust.

<https://www.econatick.org/actions/3215>

Thank you.
Anne Grady
Natick, MA

Jackie Anapolle
July 15, 2022

I've tried to stay informed about this decision as best I could. I've attended meetings, read arguments and listened to all the different comments from every angle. There is part of me which feels my words don't count or have any bearings.

I feel much is about costs to the town of Natick. I bought here over six years ago not knowing much about Natick but was truly drawn to the beauty of the Charles (in my backyard) and nature. I soon realized that the town looks the other way when the river needs attention. The town owns the land next to the river but doesn't help remove dead or fallen trees or branches that obstruct flow of river or folks wanting to enjoy boating. Large branches are obstructing the current flow but no one cares. We're in a major draught & the water level is extremely low. Nothing can be done. The water flow is stagnant! It's not so beautiful now. As a homeowner on the Charles, I feel helpless. I wonder who is really protecting our environment?

My main concern is the water level. I know the current status is a HUGE draw for folks to enjoy the "park" in South Natick. I can't imagine how awful it will be with very shallow water levels and shrinking area for any boating. I'm mainly concerned about the future water level after dam is removed. How will this removal affect the low or no flow of the Charles behind me and that flow into Elm Bank? I'm concerned about mosquitoes, bugs and the balance of nature that the committee seems to address yet ignore. I'm TRUTHFULLY WORRIED about the big picture.

I HATE that I feel most of this decision, time and money spent on research was for nothing. I sense it's always about the bottom line!! MONEY to the town of Natick! Again, I purchased property here at a very late in life age to enjoy the beauty of nature and peaceful water level which I'm terrified will ALL BE DESTROYED by folks being shortsighted.

I'm writing as a last ditch resort. HELP US PROTECT our water level & actual flow of almost stagnant Charles River!!

THANK YOU that we can now drink our water....
Jackie

Eleanor Goodman
July 15, 2022

Dear Board Members, As a homeowner and resident of beautiful Natick, I'm writing to respectfully offer my strong opinion that the Natick dam should be removed.

Throughout history, dams have been demonstrated to cause terrible environmental harm to rivers, the aquatic creatures and plants that live in them, and entire river ecologies themselves. We have a chance to remove an artificial structure that prevents the natural movement of fish and other swimmers, and leads to a harmful buildup of silt and algae. At the same time, we can preserve as many as sixty mature trees in a time when our tree cover is more and more precious.

There are many ways to make a beautiful park - the dam is absolutely not necessary to have an attractive space that the public can fully enjoy.

Let's give the river a chance to run its natural course, restoring a more natural state, saving money that can be better spent, and benefitting all of the wild creatures and ourselves.

Thank you for your time,
Eleanor Goodman
Walnut Hill
Natick

Bob Foley
July 15, 2022

I am a Natick resident, and I am writing to recommend the Charles River dam and spillway be removed, the river be restored to a more natural environment, and the Town fund a beautiful park on both sides of the river.

My primary reason to take down the dam is to support nature and the natural environment. The town of Natick has plenty of built environment, and the Charles River is an uncommon opportunity for us to restore a regional river to a more later native arrangement. The trend in many states and countries is to remove dams when possible, and that is a positive step in restoring a more natural environment.

Thanks.
Bob Foley
8 Whispering Lane
Natick

Mila Clark
July 15, 2022

Hello,
I'm a property owner on the Charles river, just right over the border in Dover. Removing the dam would have significant negative consequences for my family and my property. Please, please don't remove the dam.

Thank you,
Mila Clark

Scott McCue, on behalf of Mass Audubon

July 15, 2022 [updated on July 18]

Attached, please find Mass Audubon's written comment in support of removing the Charles River Dam.

Scott McCue (he/him/his)

Regional Director, Metro West **ATTACHMENT**

Jacob Barth
July 15, 2022

To Whom It May Concern, I am in favor or removing the South Natick Dam. I think that the environmental, safety, and fiscal benefits of removing the dam outweigh the aesthetic benefits of keep it. I think we should also be respectful of the wishes of the local indigenous people.

Best regards,
Jacob Barth
15 Barnesdale Rd

Joe Walsh
July 15, 2022

I encourage you to remove the dam.

Joe Walsh
325 Speen Street
Natick, MA 01760

Nick Walker
July 15, 2022

I am a lifelong resident of the area and an avid canoeist and fisherman. I would be willing to bet that I spend more time on the Charles from Dedham to Medfield than anyone, by a factor of ten. I know just about every foot of the river through this stretch intimately. I can say unequivocally that the stretches without pooled water from a dam are vastly more habitable to native wildlife- fish, reptiles, birds, and land animals alike. On the free flowing sections I see an abundance of wood ducks, wild turkey, weasels, owls, bats, coyotes, deer, hawks, eagles and an overwhelming variety of song birds. In the pooled water above the dams, especially at south Natick, there is overwhelmingly what I would call trash wildlife such as mute swans (hideously invasive), Canada geese (nuisance, water polluting), and mallard ducks (native but generic and prone to year round residency due to human feeding).

In the free flowing sections the fish density is noticeably higher. You can literally see hundreds of fish in sections of river that are no more than a foot deep. In the pooled water above the dams, there are obviously fish, but with less density and they don't thrive like they do in the free flowing sections.

I simply cannot accept non-removal/repair of the south Natick dam based on the weak and simplistic assertion that "it looks good."

As your article points out dams that do not produce electricity are overwhelmingly viewed in the modern area as unnecessary and an impediment to nature. Dams all over the country are being removed because we are now recognizing the damage that they do to the environment and river

ecosystem. Not to mention this dam in south Natick was built against the native Americans wishes, as surely they recognized that it would decimate fish stocks and materially impact their ability to use fish as a food resource.

This dam does not belong, period. In 2022 we hopefully know better than to leave it in place because a handful of immediate residents like the way the pond looks.

Nick Walker

Nancy Echlov

July 15, 2022

Dear Committee Members, My husband and I have lived just downstream from the dam and spillway on South Lincoln St for 35 years. Needless to say, we love the tranquility of this beautiful setting and the variety of wildlife and vegetation in our backyard (OK, maybe not so much the geese). We even renovated our house twenty-years ago, moving all the utilities out of the basement so that we continue to have service during floods. Moving into this neighborhood has been a great blessing.

I am very thankful for the thoughtfulness and clarity of the sequence of presentations and explanations relating to removal of the dam, and I support it for a number of reasons. These include future costs of maintenance, enabling fish, waterfowl, and other wildlife (not to mention kayaks) to travel the Charles from Natick to Dover freely, and saving the trees growing on the dam. For these as well as other reasons, I fully endorse the removal of the dam.

My sincere thanks to everyone for all the hard work that has gone into this proposal.

Nancy Echlov

Emily Grant

July 15, 2022

I wanted to send along feedback about the process of the Dam Advisory Committee. I am impressed by the level of analysis done by the committee, the level of communication and the lengths you've gone to collect feedback from various stakeholders. I am confident in the amount of work that has been done to understand impacts and the decision to remove the Dam and return that portion of the river to its more natural state. I sincerely appreciate the work you've all done for our town on this committee.

Thank, Emily Grant

58 High St

Wiff Peterson

July 15, 2022

Gentlemen, I've read most of the information posted and understand the expected impact of the dam removal although I'm a bit late to catch up on the progress and investigations. I did not find any information in the evaluation on whether a modification of the dam as part of an upgrade was evaluated to include low head hydropower to generate renewable energy. It strikes me such an alternate project might be done in an environmentally sustainable way generating power which might pay for the project over a reasonable number of years. Although I'm a retired Natick resident my background in chemical and environmental engineering leads me to believe that checking out this option may lead to a pretty cost-effective solution. Appreciate any consideration of the comment although it appears it's a bit late in the process.

Thanks.
Wiff Peterson
8 Allison Way
Natick, MA 01760

Marianne Iarossi
July 15, 2022

Attachment

Amy Harris

July 15

Hello, I'm writing today to voice my support for the removal of the Natick dam. As a South Natick resident who lives near and enjoys the stretch of the Charles River near the dam daily, I find the evidence in favor of restoring the river's natural flow, improving the ecosystem for fish and wildlife, and preserving the 60 mature trees on the dam's earthen structure to be overwhelming. The fact that it would eliminate costly dam maintenance and liability for the town makes it clear that it is the most fiscally responsible path forward.

Beyond the significant financial and environmental benefits that the town stands to gain by removing the dam, I am also deeply compelled by the knowledge that the Nipmunc people oppose the damming. It is time to say "enough" and remove the Natick dam.

Thank you for your consideration!

All my best,
Amy

Kevin Ryan

July 15, 2022

I want to express my support for removal. This is one case where the environmental, financial, and safety incentives align, and I don't think those considerations should be outweighed by aesthetics or nostalgia. Whatever happens, thank you for all your work on this issue.

Best,
Kevin Ryan
33 South St, South Natick

Monica Foley

July 15, 2022

Hello, Please remove the Natick Dam to help wildlife, fish and plants for the health of the natural environment.

Please respect and honor the request made by local Native Americans to remove the Natick Dam.

I want to support a request by local Native Americans and this one is something that can be accomplished.

Monica Foley
8 Whispering Lane,
Natick MA

Ross Rodino
July 15, 2022

Dear Committee Members, I have read extensively regarding the process the committee has undertaken to determine the future of the South Natick Dam. I would like to register my strong support in favor of removing the dam. To replace the current dam is very costly, continues to poorly impact the Charles River and the surrounding environment and constitutes a danger of a future break, which would negatively impact home owners down stream. I appreciate the opportunity to be heard on this important matter impacting our town.

Sincerely,
Ross Rodino
2 Avon Lane

Kathleen Danko
July 15, 2022

Hi Many towns and boards are now holding face to face meetings. I'm writing to ask that the 2 remaining meetings be live in person meetings at the town hall. Your Zoom meetings have been very informative but they do make it hard for the public to share and show their support either way.

I thank you for your efforts and participation in this process.

Two concerns for the committee:

I would like to hear if removal of spillway and sediment release would put elm bank aquifer at risk Engineers said spillway removal would have no impact to aquifer but that was in regards to water level changes, I don't believe the impact of increased sediment downstream was addressed ? Will it be?

Question about water levels at the spillway if removed . Will water level above the current spillway at the "pond" be so shallow that canoes/ kayaks will not be able to pass?

Thank you
Kathleen Demko
46 Beaver Dam Rd

Nate Ostberg
July 15, 2022

Hello, I'd like to voice my support for removing the south Natick dam on the Charles. That is all. Thanks !

William Burns

July 15, 2022

Back in the 70s my father and i would canoe the charles, it was very picturesque back then. That was just before they started cleaning it up. For good reason we called it the grubby. So happy it got cleaned up.

Meghan Veg

July 15, 2022

Hello, I felt compelled to send this email to voice my feelings on the South Natick Dam. It may be all over the place but it's 100% my heart.

I have lived in Natick for most of my entire life and throughout my life have experienced many things, from love to loss and everything in between. The years pass and things constantly change, people come and go and time marches on...but the Dam has ALWAYS been there.

The South Natick Dam is my emotional support location. Anytime I need a moment to collect my thoughts, to cry, to reward myself, to nourish my soul, I go to the dam. I bring new and old friends to the dam just to chat and eat next to it's pleasing flow. I'll bring my notebook to the waters edge and just release everything on paper to the chorus of the waterfowl. I'm crying even thinking about losing the Dam.

I live across from Natick High and I had to watch while this town cut down the most perfectly beautiful trees to put up a cold and sterile new high school. Trees and fields I grew up appreciating ripped from the earth for concrete and asphalt. Losing the tree right at the end of my street next to the rock was like losing a family member. When the tree at the West Street edge of the football field parking lot was removed, you took away a childhood meeting spot. When I lost these things, the dam was still there. When I lost my middle school building (Wilson) full of memories to a new school, I went to the Dam. When the old highschool turned into grass, I went to the dam. When I lost my grandfather, I went to the dam. When I was falling in love with my partner, we went to the dam. When I bought my first car, I drove it to the dam. The dam is not just a dam, it's a fixed point in many people's lives and memories.

This town has taken so many important memory locations from me and if the dam is removed, this town will be responsible for an overwhelming loss that I will not be able to stomach. There is no other spot in this town to fully enjoy the Charles River like the area around the dam. There's no other spot in this town even close to it's beauty either. Natick has gone insane adding buildings and nonsense in every single crevice of space available and it's distressing. I know I'm not alone in my sentiments and I'm just truly heartbroken that anyone would remove such a mainstay of such a beautiful area. If I was lucky enough to live by the falls, I'd be absolutely beside myself with anger if anyone even proposed renovating my backyard.

Like most things these days, the conversation over the dam is Us vs Them and each side has valid arguments and I am typically all for progress and positive change but I just cannot see how

removing the dam would do anything but ruin an area that is the last piece of untouched Natick that is enjoyable. The rest of this town is being paved over and commercialized. Invest in repairing the dam and keep South Natick the way it should be: a shining example of a New England town on the banks of the Charles River.

I'm sure this will fall on deaf ears but I wanted at least 1 person (whoever is reading this) to know that if the dam is removed, there will be a deeply broken heart and a severely scorned soul over here.

Thanks,
Meghan

Enoch S. Huang
July 16, 2022

To the Members of the South Natick Dam Committee: I appreciate the opportunity to submit a comment supporting the proposal to remove the South Natick Dam.

It seems to me that removal has significant benefits for improving river ecology through maintaining lower water temperatures, the flow of sediment, and the increased movement of native/wild fish. Repairing the dam would be twice as expensive as removing it, which would not include the ongoing expenses of repair and maintenance in the future. I understand there are short term benefits for dam repair, such as maintaining the aesthetics for sentimental reasons, but I also believe that over time, natural flora will beautify the area surrounding the river.

I strongly believe that the ecological and financial benefits far outweigh the loss.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely
Enoch S. Huang, PhD
Newton MA

Maggie Ryan
July 16, 2022

To whom it may concern: It is of immense importance that the Charles River be restored to its natural course. Among other reasons, the Nipmuc people have clearly expressed their desire for this and it is our duty as a community to respect this.

Fondly,
Maggie Ryan

Andrew Williams

July 16, 2022

Hello, I write in support of the spillway removal for Natick Dam.

I am a local resident to the dam living at 129 Eliot Street, Natick. I overlook the river, and the water level may drop and impact my ability to kayak and canoe. Nonetheless, the environmental advantages of a free flowing river, the mature tree grove and avoidance of future maintenance costs are compelling reasons for spillway removal.

As treasurer for the Natick Community Organic Farm (117 Eliot Street) I have been actively involved in local sustainability issues for more than 6 years. Natick town has a stated goal for a sustainable future. If, as a community, we are serious about fulfilling these pledges, we cannot turn back at the first test and pander to the interests of a small subset of home owners and their noisy campaign.

Yours sincerely,
Andrew Williams
In a personal capacity

Walter Kolosky

July 16, 2022

Dear Committee, For 20 years, my wife and I have taken walks down to the South Natick Dam and enjoyed the sights and sounds. However, we have always noted that the beauty of the area was not natural. To us, the sound of the falls is soothing, but the sight of it is not. Man-made water falls are not real water falls. I register my support to let the river flow naturally as it should. It is better for the river, the creatures that live in it, the nature that surrounds it and, in the long term, the people that border it. All of Natick will benefit from the removal of the unnecessary dam in added leisure opportunities and subtracted economic burden. Let The River Flow.

Regards,

Walter Kolosky
5 Libby Road.

Justin Cordonnier

July 16, 2022

Hi, I am writing in support of the removal of the Charles River dam in South Natick, which will improve the stream quality as well as being beneficial to the various fish populations in the river. Throughout the country there is a growing trend towards dam removal in an effort to improve river conditions, as well as fish and wildlife.

Thank you for your consideration,
Justin Cordonnier

Needham, MA

Anne Aisenberg

July 17, 2022

To Whom it May Concern: I am writing to you in favor of restoring the Charles River to its natural state by removing the dam. This would have many important benefits including protecting the environment, enabling fish and wildlife to flourish, saving over 60 shade providing trees, honoring indigenous people, and it would be a tremendous cost savings both in the short and long term.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Anne Aisenberg

Leo Ryan

July 17, 2022

Thanks for all your work in gathering information on spillway/dam options

As a Natick resident, engaged environmentalist, and the current volunteer chair of Natick's Sustainability Committee I offer my voice in support of the removal of the spillway/dam in South Natick and restoration of the river flow in South Natick.

After more than a year of committed study, expert analysis and public discussion it is clear to me that Natick and the larger community is better served by removing the spillway/dam. The rationale for removal is based on:

Economics - more than \$1 million saved by removing the spillway/dam as well as lower ongoing costs and reduced liability

Environment - studies conclude improved flora and fauna health with removal and endorsement of removal by key environmental groups. (Sierra Club, Mass Aud.,)

Ethics - Nipmuc indigenous community have asked that the river be restored and the spillway removed.

Thanks for your work on this.

With gratitude,

Leo Ryan

John Thomson

July 17, 2022

Hi, I am a 27 year long, current resident of Natick. I wanted to let you know that I support the removal of the South Natick Dam. Thank you for your time.

John Thomson
18 Gannett Rd.
Natick, MA 01760

Hatty Tsai
July 17, 2022

Hello, I am a long time Natick resident. I am in favor of removing the dam and spillway and returning the river to a more natural state.

Thank you,
Hatty Tsai
5 Libby Rd.
Natick, MA

Dallas C. Kennedy
July 17, 2022

Hi, I would like to add my support for removing the spillway in South Natick.

Sincerely,
Dallas C. Kennedy
4 Granby Road
Natick, MA 01760

Beverly K. Philip
July 18, 2022

To the Charles River Dam Advisory Committee: Hello, I am a many-year kayaker on the Charles River and speaking here for the community of boaters on the River. The Natick Dam serves to keep sufficient water in the river for recreational activity. Removal of the dam will make the river impassable for a considerable distance upstream – please note the projected river depth at the upstream end of modeled area is only 1.5-2 feet. Furthermore, the model does not identify the month that is used for that data projection; as you know the summer recreational season is significantly drier than May-June, and the impact on recreation use in the actual season should be evaluated.

If the dam is removed, there will likely be a significant distance that boaters (canoe, kayak, paddleboard) will be unable to use the river. Therefore there need to be plans for new water entry

access locations above and below the impacted area. There also needs to be a plan for how boaters can portage around the low water area.

How far upstream will the drop to marginal water level extend, considering also the Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary about a mile upstream and for which months? What are the projected impacts on river depth and impact on wildlife in those areas?

In summary, It is important to assess and consider the full impact of the dam removal before deciding how to proceed. As an essential part of that, there need to be detailed plans for mitigation of any impact on the historic, decades-long recreational use of the river.

Thank you for your attention.

Beverly K. Philip, MD, FACA, FASA

Jay Turner

July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, I have lived in South Natick for 16 years and pass over the Pleasant Street bridge almost every day. I'm writing to express my support for removing the spillway and restoring the flow of the Charles River.

I sympathize with my neighbors who who are in favor of restoring the dam. It is an iconic structure that contributes to the aesthetic beauty of South Natick and anchors a strong sense of place. However, I think it is important to take a broader view, that considers the cultural and ecological significance of the river to the indigenous residents of Natick and sees the potential in restoring the Charles River's flow.

The Nipmuc, or people of the fresh waters, saw the Quinobequin (Charles River) as the source of their identity, sustenance, and mobile lifeways. To them--and to those of us who are reckoning with the history of colonization--the dam disrupted their access to fish and other natural resources. While to some residents today the dam is a defining feature of the town, to others it symbolizes the forces of colonization that resulted in forced assimilation, dispossession, and genocide. Removing the dam is a small, but important, gesture of reparation to the Nipmuc people.

Removing the spillway also offers the opportunity to improve the ecological vitality of the Charles River. A free-flowing Charles River, buffered by restored wetlands, will be better positioned to adapt to a changing climate, improve native habitat, and contribute to the restoration of migratory fish runs. Removing the spillway offers the opportunity for Natick to contribute to broader efforts to restore the ecological integrity of the entire Charles River watershed.

That removal is significantly less expensive, both upfront and in terms of long-term maintenance, seals the deal. I hope the town will be able to use those funds, or secure grant funding for additional funds, that would allow for renovating the site in a way that recognizes and honors indigenous communities throughout Natick history and improves public access and recreational opportunities on the Charles River for the whole town of Natick and surrounding communities.

In doing so, I hope the re-imagining of this space will allow a divided community to come together to create a new, shared sense of place. Of the many ideas put forward, the possibility for a footbridge above the river that echoes the form of the dam strikes me as especially appealing.

Thank you for the time you have invested in considering the future of the South Natick Dam. The careful and thoughtful work of the committee offers a model for such work.

Sincerely,
Jay Turner
21 Glenwood St.
Natick

Tracy Gleason
July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, As a Natick resident of 17 years, I am writing to express my support for removing the spillway and restoring the flow of the Charles River.

I sympathize with town residents who are in favor of restoring the dam. It is an iconic structure that contributes to the aesthetic beauty of South Natick and anchors a sense of place. However, I think it is important to take a broader view, that considers the cultural and ecological significance of the river to the indigenous residents of Natick and sees the potential in restoring the Charles River's flow.

The Nipmuc, or people of the fresh waters, saw the Quinobequin (Charles River) as the source of their identity, sustenance, and mobile lifeways. To them--and to those of us who are reckoning with the history of colonization--the dam disrupted their access to fish and other natural resources. While to some residents today the dam is a defining feature of the town, to others it symbolizes the forces of colonization that resulted in forced assimilation, dispossession, and genocide. Removing the dam is a small, but important, gesture of reparation to the Nipmuc people. For me, this idea outweighs most other considerations, but removal of the dam has other important benefits as well.

Removing the spillway also offers the opportunity to improve the ecological vitality of the Charles River. A free-flowing Charles River, buffered by restored wetlands, will be better positioned to adapt to a changing climate, improve native habitat, and contribute to the restoration of migratory fish runs. Removing the spillway offers the opportunity for Natick to contribute to broader efforts to restore the ecological integrity of the entire Charles River watershed.

Even if removing the spillway cost more than repairing the dam, I would stand by this position. The fact that removal is significantly less expensive seals the deal. I hope the town will invest some of these savings into renovating the site in a way that recognizes and honors indigenous communities throughout Natick history and improves public access and recreational opportunities on the Charles River for the whole town of Natick. In doing so, I hope the re-imagining of this space will allow a divided community to come together to create a new, shared sense of place.

Sincerely,

Tracy Gleason
Natick Resident

Adam Van Arsdale

July 18, 2022

Dear members of the select board and Charles River Dam advisory committee, My family have been South Natick residents for seven years. We regularly spend time at the parks adjacent to the dam/spillway and enjoy all that it offers the town in both aesthetic and practical value. That said, we fully support the proposed plan to remove the spillway and return this section of the Charles to a more natural waterflow. The possibilities this change might produce for a re-imagined and more natural scene at S. Natick is exciting by itself, let alone the cost savings of not having to maintain the dam, or the loss of trees and natural beauty necessary to bring the dam into compliance.

Sincerely,
Adam Van Arsdale
3 Woodcock Path

Angela Bahns

July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, As a Natick resident, I am writing to express my support for removing the spillway and restoring the flow of the Charles River.

I sympathize with town residents who are in favor of restoring the dam. It is an iconic structure that contributes to the aesthetic beauty of South Natick and anchors a sense of place. However, I think it is important to take a broader view, that considers the cultural and ecological significance of the river to the indigenous residents of Natick and sees the potential in restoring the Charles River's flow.

The Nipmuc, or people of the fresh waters, saw the Quinobequin (Charles River) as the source of their identity, sustenance, and mobile lifeways. To them--and to those of us who are reckoning with the history of colonization--the dam disrupted their access to fish and other natural resources. While to some residents today the dam is a defining feature of the town, to others it symbolizes the forces of colonization that resulted in forced assimilation, dispossession, and genocide. Removing the dam is a small, but important, gesture of reparation to the Nipmuc people.

Removing the spillway also offers the opportunity to improve the ecological vitality of the Charles River. A free-flowing Charles River, buffered by restored wetlands, will be better positioned to adapt to a changing climate, improve native habitat, and contribute to the restoration of migratory fish runs. Removing the spillway offers the opportunity for Natick to contribute to broader efforts to restore the ecological integrity of the entire Charles River watershed.

Even if removing the spillway cost more than repairing the dam, I would stand by this position. The fact that removal is significantly less expensive seals the deal. I hope the town will invest some of

these savings into renovating the site in a way that recognizes and honors indigenous communities throughout Natick history and improves public access and recreational opportunities on the Charles River for the whole town of Natick. In doing so, I hope the re-imagining of this space will allow a divided community to come together to create a new, shared sense of place.

Sincerely,
Angela Bahns
13 Richmond Rd
Natick, MA 01760

Anne and Pat Giersch

July 18, 2022

Dear Advisory Committee, As Natick residents of 22 years, we are writing to thank you all for your service and to express our support for removing the spillway and restoring the flow of the Charles River.

We sympathize with town residents who are in favor of restoring the dam. It is a lovely spot as it stands, and, for many, change can be hard or scary.

However, there is every reason to believe that the site can be made just as beautiful--and more natural as well as conforming to the Nipmuc Tribal Council's wishes-- if the spillway is removed. The removal of the spillway, moreover, will bring the Charles River closer to being a free river again--where fish can more easily swim upriver to spawn.

Finally, the Committee should keep in mind the finances of our community, where we've struggled over the Covid years (and before) to pay the costs associated with schools and other services. Removing the spillway costs less, both now and in the future. It would be irresponsible, we believe, for the town's leaders to miss this chance to enact both environmental and fiscal progress.

Thank you,
Anne and Pat Giersch

Brad Peterson

July 15, 2022 and July 18, 2022

I have two attachments for you now, that you may include.

i) PDF of the results of our petition.

ii) Letter written to me by George Hailer on aeration at the dam, Biological Oxygen Demand and the potential effect on down stream ecosystems. George is happy to have it shared with the Committee. I sent it to Claire Rundelli at the Town and she asked to share it with the Committee. So if it may be a duplicate.

Much appreciated, and thank you for your work with the Committee.
Brad

Here is the results of our survey work for the Committee. Much appreciated,

Brad

ATTACHMENT

