

Charles River Dam Advisory Committee | Meeting #13

July 26, 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 thirteenth meeting on Tuesday, July 26, 2022, to develop its final report/recommendation to the Town of Natick Select Board. Sixty people attended this meeting: 15 AC members (2 absent AC members shared written comments in advance of the meeting), 2 Town and CBI project staff, and 43 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

- Volunteer Advisory Committee members will contribute to drafting efforts for a final report to the Select Board.
- A next Advisory Committee meeting will be scheduled to review, finalized, and approve a complete report to the Select Board.
- The Planning Team will post the AC Meeting #13 recording and slides on the project webpage.

WELCOME & COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Ona Ferguson, CBI Facilitation Team, welcomed participants and reviewed the meeting agenda. AC members requested notes from their twelfth meeting on July 19 be updated and voted on at their next meeting.

DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATION TO SELECT BOARD

Following the discussion and agreement reached in the July 19 meeting, a small group of Committee members volunteered to help draft the Committee's report to the Select Board. In the July 26 meeting, Committee members reviewed a first draft of the recommendation section of the report and shared feedback. Key discussion threads included:

- The Committee's report needs to present the investment in the surrounding park lands as an integral component of the Committee's recommendation.
- The Committee would like the Town to be investing in all design work concurrently for efficient and ease of permitting (i.e., timing of park design should coincide with design work for spillway removal).
- The Committee would like the Town to pursue external funding sources for spillway removal, as well as park design. Any money freed up by grant funding should be invested in the park areas.
- The Committee noted that the Town will need to engage subject matter experts to lead park design elements, and that a guiding ethos for park design work was captured in the beginning of the landscape architecture presentation from Halvorson's Tighe & Bond Studio.

Following feedback on the draft recommendation section of the report, Committee members discussed the outline of the report and what should be included in the rationale, minority report, and process sections of the report.

- Committee members noted that the Natick community and members of the Committee frequently cited the testimony of the Natick Nipmuc representatives as a key component of their thinking about spillway removal, and the Committee could include language in the report that speaks to the ongoing relationship with the original stewards of this land.
- Committee members discussed that this report would likely be longer than originally anticipated to include information and the rationale from this robust Committee process.
- Committee members Martin Kessel and David Lodding shared their intention to develop a minority rationale section of the report to share with the Select Board where their thinking diverged from the majority of the Committee on the topics of aesthetics and navigability.
- Committee members discussed concerns about abutters and other members of the public who prefer the option of dam repair and maintenance. Two Committee members shared the impression that some abutters don't feel as though they were consulted in this process, and that the "save the dam" movement was not sufficiently acknowledged. Other Committee members shared their perspective that the abutters had a large voice in this process, through public comment, Committee surveys of the Natick community, the Committee's meetings with direct abutters, the dedication of Town resources to seeking answers for concerns and questions posed by abutters and other members of the public throughout the process, and personal meetings between Committee members and members of the "save the dam" movement to exchange ideas and hear concerns. Committee members suggested that the process section of the report describe the different forms of outreach and public engagement conducted throughout the Committee process.

NEXT STEPS

Advisory Committee members Bekah Stendahl, Chris Stillman, Martin Kessel, David Lodding, Claire Rundelli, and Jillian Wilson-Martin volunteered to draft the next iteration of the Committee's final report. They will work with the facilitation team to develop an updated draft report to share with the Committee in mid-August, and the Committee will reconvene at the end of August or early September to review and finalize the Committee report to the Select Board.

APPENDIX A: ATTENDANCE

Advisory Committee Members

Mike Balcom, Community Member
Dirk Coburn, Finance Committee Representative
Jeannine Furrer, Historic District Commission Representative
Martin Kessel, Community Member
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
Aaron Spelker, Commission on Disability Representative
Bekah Stendahl, Community Member
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 Staff

Ona Ferguson, CBI Facilitator
Maggie Osthues, CBI Facilitator

43 interested members of the public also attended the meeting.

APPENDIX B: WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

Town of Natick: Charles River Dam Advisory Committee
July 26, 2022, 4:00 - 6:30 PM ET Meeting
Advance Written Public Comments (*dated: 25 July 2022*)

Elina Shnayder

July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Elina Shnayder. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear- not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
Elina Shnayder

Molly Concannon

July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Molly Concannon. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear- not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
Molly

Nancy Quinlan

July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Nancy Quinlan. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear- not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

Furthermore, if there was not a dam there now it would never be approved to install one now knowing what we know about the environment including wildlife.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
Nancy Quinlan
31 Water St. Natick

Mary Brown
July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Mary Brown. I live near the dam in South Natick. My priority is environmental. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. Both the health of the River now and better resilience in the face of climate change with the accompanying severe storms, increased flooding, and rising temperatures make removal of the spillway the overwhelmingly best option. Trees are one of our best defenses against climate change. The liability risk for the town if the dam should fail, the large and continuing expense of maintaining the dam as it is, and the wisdom of the Nipmuc only add to this argument.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.
Sincerely,
Mary Brown

Catherine LeBlanc
July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Catherine LeBlanc. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear- not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

I have been following this process intermittently for over a year. Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
Catherine LeBlanc

Laura Rojo MacLeod
July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Laura. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future

generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear– not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
Prof.Laura Rojo MacLeod

Alan Gordon
July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Alan Gordon. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear– not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
Alan

Diana Bawn
July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Diana Bawn. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear– not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
Diana Bawn

Anne Brubaker
July 18, 2022

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

I think it's important to consider the cultural and ecological significance of the river to the indigenous residents of Natick as well as the benefits of 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 our community to come together to create a new, shared sense of place.

Best wishes,
Anne Brubaker

Eric Nguyen
July 18, 2022

33 Fiske Street
Natick, MA 01760

ATTACHMENT

Aileen Zogby

July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Aileen Zogby. I am a long time resident of Natick, residing on the south side of the dam. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear– not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely, Aileen Zogby

Lisa Rothstein

July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Lisa Rothstein. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear– not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

As someone who lives a stones throw from the river, I enjoy the beauty of the Charles River by kayaking and walking it's riverbank pathways. It's time to return it to it's natural flow by removing these dams.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
Lisa Rothstein

Mia & Mark Kheyfetz

July 18, 2022

We write to express our strong support for removal of the dam and spillway on the Charles/Quinobequin River in South Natick.

The work done by the committee to examine this issue from all angles has been commendable, and we appreciate the time the committee members have put in both to understand the options and implications, and to share all of that information with the Natick Community.

As Natick residents we feel that we cannot in good conscience continue to support a dam on this site. We are temporary stewards of this land, and must do what is in the best interest of the environment for future generations. We have an opportunity here to begin to repair some of the harm done to the river and its environs. At the same time, in listening to and respecting the wishes of the Nipmuc people who have spoken up in favor of removal, we can begin to build a better relationship with our Indigenous community members.

At the end of the day, as parents of young children filled with so much concern about the environment, we feel that it would be unjust not to do what we can to improve, in any small way we can, the health of the environment they will inherit.

Sincerely,
Mia & Mark Kheyfetz
19 Beverly Rd.

Laura Biggs
July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, I am a Natick resident, and I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear- it is the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
Laura Biggs
3 Lamplight Cir, Natick, MA 01760

Leah Staffier
July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Leah Staffier. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear- not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
Leah Staffier

George Stamatos

July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is George Stamatos. I am a Boston resident but I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear- not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely, George Stamatos

Peter Kutchukian

July 18, 2022

I wanted to express my support of the removal of the South Natick dam. I've lived in the vicinity of the gorgeous Charles River since 2004, and have resided in Natick since 2013. I am an avid outdoorsman, and have spent many evenings walking along or fishing in the Charles River. I am primarily motivated by the positive long term effect that dam removal will have on the habitat of the river. While some may argue for the aesthetic appeal of the dam, there are plenty of spots on the Charles that are absolutely lovely and enjoyed by many, where there isn't a dam in sight. What a fantastic opportunity the Town of Natick has to set an example for other towns along the Charles that will face similar decisions when tasked with potentially removing dams in disrepair.

Sincerely,
Peter Kutchukian

Susan Blease

July 18, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Sue. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear- not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
Sue

PS Those who say “you won’t know what you have lost until it is gone, might think differently if the Dam is restored and they see the destruction and removal of the trees on the dam which would expose a road clogged with traffic.

They might think differently when choices need to be made about what to plant on the dam which does not allow trees.

The choice of river friendly fertilizer to make the grass green?

Water restrictions that result in yellow grass?

Lawn mowers that drone throughout the summer?

Trash that blows from passing cars?

A town that does not vote funds to maintain the landscape on the dam

The loss of reflections from trees.

If the dam is restored, it will not look like it does now, it will look ugly like the side of a highway.

Cole Rainey-Slavick

July 19, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Cole Rainey-Slavick. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear- not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people, who have taken care of this land since before this country existed. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

Additionally these dams provide a danger to life, both for fish who get trapped below them, and for people, swimmers and boaters, who may get trapped in the hydraulic jump. Water is life, let us return life to the river.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely, Cole Rainey-Slavick

William D. Lawson

July 19, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is William Lawson. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear- not only is it the most fiscally

responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

I am not an expert, but I have seen people opposed to removing it make some inflammatory and irrational claims about the water above the dam dropping many feet and making recreational use impossible. It seems to me that in a worst case scenario removing the dam would not cause the water above it to drop more than the height of the dam, divided by two, since the water below it will rise until equilibrium is reached. I believe it would not even fall that much, since downstream factors will slow the flow and prevent it.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
William D. Lawson

Sarah Slavick
July 19, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Sarah Slavick. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. There was a time in the past when dams were seen as a good thing. In this case, it is not a good thing. The choice to remove the spillway is clear – not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
Sarah Slavick

Carolyn Carter
July 19, 2022

I live near the south natick dam and I favor removing it. That will be better for the environment, safer in the long run, and better-looking.

Carolyn Carter
6 Morse lane

Will Friedland
July 19, 2022

Here is a letter from the Native Fish Coalition in support for the South Natick Dam Removal.

Thank you,
Will Friedland

ATTACHMENT

Jeff Gifford
July 19, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Jeff Gifford. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear – not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS by Jeff Gifford:

The dam is not natural and is impeding the flow of the river.

The river below the dam is extremely low most years during the summer months and the removal of the dam will benefit the river downstream. Low water becomes too warm and is not good for the ecology of the river. Also, the river below the next dam downstream (Red Wing Bay Dam) is also incredibly low at this time of year.

Folks who oppose the dam removal are complaining more about the visual appeal of the dam removal and are either ignoring or are uneducated regarding the ecological benefit of removing the dam. The removal of the dam is more important for the health of the river, not what dam removal opponents want.

You need to convince dam removal opponents that the river above the dam will become visually appealing again soon after the dam is removed. The river channel and vegetation will come back soon after the dam is removed. The silt behind the dam will flush out with adequate river velocity.

The river upstream of the removed dam will go back to the historical river channel and there should be adequate water depth during most months.

Please try to minimize the removal of larger trees in the area of the east side of the dam since everyone enjoys looking at them. And with the trees removed there will be fewer birds.

Yes I would miss the sound of the water going over the spillway but that is no reason to keep the dam. Perhaps you could design some kind of side channel waterfall so folks could hear flowing water after the dam is removed?

I am a Trout Unlimited member and the dam removal will benefit eastern brook trout that live in tributaries of the Charles.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely, Jeff Gifford

Steven Cosmos

July 19, 2022

Dear Advisory Committee, This letter is in support of removing the existing dam at the River to restore the River to it's natural state. I support adding stones in the River to create the soothing sound of running water we enjoy at the Falls.

Since the dam Demo estimated cost \$1 million I suggest we utilize the additional \$1 million not utilized for restoration to create a useable and exciting new park on the south side of the falls.

Best Regards,
Steven Cosmos
Landscape Architect
www.cosmosassociates.com

Alan Seru

July 19, 2022

- 1) Has the town contacted the Trustees of Reservations, who own and operate 120 natural areas in our state? If the town does not wish to prioritize maintaining the beauty and historically significant dam, why not sell this land to an agency entrusted to do exactly that?
- 2) The Town could take the proceeds of a potential sale and put them towards an additional playground / park or green space in the south natick area by buying a large estate when one comes up for sale. With so much development over the past 10 years, there is a need for additional town park area between cottage street / south natick dam areas outside of memorial. (Think of all the residential area developments between coolidge field and memorial school)
- 2) In any case, either with help of an outside group such as the Trustees / state grant or through town maintenance it would be great to build and maintain a walking trail on the opposite bank from Elliot street. This area behind the glenwood cemetery could be accessed via easements and allow a long scenic walking trail on that shore, ideally with a footbridge back to Elliot to make a great walking loop and a sure attraction in town to complement the rail trail.
- 3) The picnic at the falls area could be more child friendly as the gaps are a concern when children visit the area.

Thank you for any consideration of these ideas as you work through this decision process.

-Alan Seru

Damon Carter

July 19, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Damon Carter. I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear- it is the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, and it eliminates the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

I live on the Charles, downstream, and it is important to me and to everyone who enjoys the river, that it be as natural as possible. I realize that you will lose a scenic pond, but a restored river passage will also be scenic, and a boon to the paddlers and wild denizens as well.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
Damon Carter
Dedham

Dan Brielmann
July 19, 2022

Hello South Natick Charles River Dam Advisory Committee...

I wrote a song many years ago about the Snail Darter and how a dam ended the life of a river...

<https://eawakening.wistia.com/medias/4999lcdz3v> Here is the link but you can also view it at e-Awakening.com. It is on my album "The Road"

Also: Check out my latest song. "Climate Emergency"...

<https://eawakening.wistia.com/medias/tk60d3vowp>

Oh by the way...I think you should take out the dam...Give the river it's life back!

Matt Connell
July 19, 2022

I am submitting the attached for the Committee to hopefully consider prior to the 7.26 meeting.

PS If in tonight's discussion those in favor of spillway removal again site tree preservation, specifically the '60 mature trees', as reasoning. Could you please ask my question for me- will those trees survive the river's relocation? (I don't know the answer but my guess is- no. Their root systems will be shocked by the dramatic change in water level/proximity.

ATTACHMENT

Robert (Bill) Ramage
July 19, 2022

To the South Natick Dam Advisory Committee, I'd like to thank you for the many hours of time you have invested in determining the best option to respond to the Commonwealth's notification that we need to either remove 60+ trees and rebuild the South Natick Dam or remove the spillway and return it to its original free-flowing state.

While I understand the desire to save this iconic South Natick landmark, and I understand that change is hard, I would like to write in favor of restoring the river to its natural state for the following reasons:

Economic: The experts have estimated the cost of reinforcing the dam and rebuilding the spillway to be more than \$1,000,000 more than removing the spillway and restoring the river to its original state. In addition, the Town will have to continue to pay to monitor and have the dam inspected in perpetuity, at an estimated cost of close to another million dollars over the next 30 years. Lastly, should the dam fail, my understanding is that the Town would be responsible for any damage downriver. With climate change rearing its hot and ugly head this is another consideration the committee should take into account.

Environmental: Restoring the river to its natural flow offers several benefits, including:

- Saving about 60 large trees on the earthen portion of the dam.
- Toxic algae blooms will be lessened according to the Charles River Watershed Association letter to the Dam Advisory Committee.
- Fish and other wildlife will be better able to thrive within our town's portion of the river without an obstacle that they cannot traverse. Cold water streams with Brook Trout downstream in Dover would gain access to 26 miles of river and surrounding tributaries to find mates, food and escape drought and floods.

Ethical: Restoring the Quinobequin to its original state is important to the Nipmuc and other native Americans. After hundreds of years of disrespecting native Americans, it's time to respect their wishes and restore the Quinobequin to its free-flowing state.

Thank you
Robert (Bill) Ramage

Laura Viale
July 19, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is _ . I strongly urge Natick to remove the Charles River Dam and restore a clean, free-flowing, climate-resilient Charles River for future generations. The choice to remove the spillway is clear- not only is it the most fiscally responsible, ethical, and environmental option, but the dam is an affront to the Natick Nipmuc people. We must honor the wishes of past & present Nipmuc leaders who have long called for dam removal, and eliminate the hazard of catastrophic dam failure.

Thank you for your hard work and research on this important decision.

Sincerely,
Laura Viale

Candy Hulton

July 19, 2022

During this heat wave 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. Thank you



Jim and Beverly Philip

July 19, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, Our names are Jim and Beverly Philip. We strongly urge Natick to save the Charles River Dam. The river will be unusable for recreation water use on that area for a long way and a long time if the dam is gone. .

We have launched from the current Dam area. Beneath the water It is deep mud for quite a distance. It will likely take a long while for the area to “naturally” re/plant itself. We say this because when the Army Corps of engineers worked on the Muddy River, They had to add earth, fully plant it and fence it off for 2 years. Check it out- No quick, ‘natural’ answer at all! The cost to Natick to fix the multi/year eyesore must be added to any budget.

Save the Charles for human recreation and save Natick the not-yet-budgeted costs to fix it up.

Ardent Charles River supporters!
Jim and Beverly

Jeff Hoover
July 19, 2022

Restore the Charles River to its natural level and flow.

The river has existed for longer than recorded history. The dam is an aberration to the natural environment. Now that it is failing, we should take the opportunity to remove it and create sustainable recreation around the flowing river.

Thanks,
Jeff Hoover

Karen Palmer
July 19, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, My name is Karen Palmer. I strongly urge Natick NOT to remove the Charles River Dam. The choice to remove the spillway is not at all clear; in fact, it's extremely nuanced. It is NOT necessarily the most fiscally responsible, ethical, or environmental option. The idea that the dam is an affront to the Nipmuc people seems extremely far-fetched to me, and if we honored every wish of long-ago leaders, we'd be making some terrible mistakes in our very different situations today, so that too is a red herring and false argument. We must honor the wishes of Same with the scare tactic of a catastrophic dam failure. If the present-day dam is properly maintained, this "catastrophe" will not occur. Again, more scare tactics on the part of environmental doomsayers.

On the opposite side of this argument are the thousands of people who've enjoyed this beautiful park for decades and who continue to enjoy it as a jewel in the crown of S. Natick (and Natick itself) and visit it regularly for the purposes of enjoyment of the walking space, the shade of the trees, a space for children to play and be outdoors, and a gathering place for friends to enjoy a picnic together or just a chance to enjoy this lovely and natural recreational space.

Just recently I did exactly that: I came to the Dam with three of my female friends (we are all in our sixties and seventies), and we set up our lawn chairs under a tree, had a boxed lunch and enjoyed a chance to be outdoors in nature together and also to catch up on each other's news. While we were sitting there, two caretakers walked by on the sidewalk just below us, with two young boys, both clearly mentally handicapped although completely mobile, and both these young boys were filled with delight and being outdoors, next to the river, in these beautiful and safe surroundings.

I have also spoken to an experienced fisherman and environmentalist who pointed out to me that, in fact, destroying the Natick Dam would NOT allow the fish to make their way downstream to the mouth of the Charles, as several other dams, in towns further along, would prevent their passage. So that argument, too, is a false one. Uninformed people might nod their heads and say, "Yes, that makes good sense," but indeed it does NOT.

There are many, many people, both residents of Natick and surrounding towns and others from further afield who will, if the "Restore the River" lobby has its way, lose a priceless scenic and recreational destination and historic park. The environmentalist activist groups are **WRONG** about this. We need to protect the existing (and historic) dam and preserve it for the sake of those who are enjoying it today, as well as for generations to come.

I know that thousands of people agree with the arguments I've made here, and that it will be a tragic day indeed if the misguided and untrustworthy environmentalist lobby has its way. Please listen to these important voices and open your minds and your hearts to what others who love Natick as much you claim to be saying.

Please do not destroy this letter, and that too would be evidence of your poor judgment and untrustworthy tactics.

Sincerely,
Karen Palmer, 4 Temple Street, Natick (owner and resident)

Susie Bresney
July 19, 2022

Hello, I am writing to provide a written comment about the Charles River dam. I am a resident of the Charles River watershed (downstream of the dam) and a water resources engineer. Personally, I care deeply about the health of the river and the safety of my community and my neighbors. For this reason, dam removal is the right option for this dam. Professionally, I know and understand the benefits of dam removal, to the river itself, all living things that inhabit the river and area nearby (as fish populations can access new habitats and reproduce, as nutrients can move through the system, as sediment can be transported, as water quality can improve, not just riverine ecosystems improve, but all wildlife that consumes riverine species - birds, reptiles, mammals, etc also improve), to the communities up and downstream who will experience flood mitigation benefits and increase climate resiliency from eliminating aging infrastructure and improved recreational use and aesthetics of a free flowing river.

I also want to comment from my professional experience on the dam removal process. It is not a fast one, or one done without studies or extensive review and input from experts and community members as some people have expressed concern for. Many engineers, fish biologists, wetland scientists, community members, local organizations, historical societies and others will not just optionally be involved, but are actually required to be involved depending on the permits needed for this specific dam and situation. The process can take many years, where the impacts of removal are studied thoroughly and exhaustively, until mitigation for any potential impact is integrated into the removal design and construction. This includes everything from understanding impacts to nearby bridges, water supplies, sediment contaminants to what plants will reestablish after removal. Even developing a park, river access, and educational signage will be part of this process. Additionally, there is funding available from the state and federal governments to almost entirely cover the one-time cost of removal, where funding for repairs is much harder to come by and will continue to come at the expense of the town and ultimately, local taxpayers for decades down the road.

Removing the dam is the best option, and the right thing to do.

Kathy Demko

July 19, 2022

I'm sorry I couldn't attend today's session. I had trouble finding the Zoom link.

I appreciate all the work that's been done but am concerned some studies didn't answer the right questions.

Years ago the river used to change colors due to contaminants.

I'm worried about spreading the buried contamination when the water from the dam is released due to release, it could be hidden in the sediment below the falls.

I'm asking for your assurance that additional required studies for regulatory agencies will include more environmental studies, water studies with release of results including contaminants. I grew up on Lincoln St, swam and played in the river like so many - I lost many members of my family to cancer (my older sister another to glioblastoma multi forms, brother to sarcoma and my dad and other brother had / has kidney cancer. For many years we thought cancer came from the river. Studies were done to look at high incidence on Glen and Pleasant Street and other areas close to the river. Cause was never proven, my family was found to have a condition that predisposes us to cancer but some docs say the river contamination could have predisposed us as well. The river is cleaner than it was back then.. Connection was never proven.

National Historic Registry and other agencies will address concerns if any about proximity to Indian burial ground and risk of uncovering remains. I do not think park plans and boardwalk presented take the history and historic location into consideration when design was presented.

Thank you for your time.

Kathy

Kris Gusmini

July 19, 2022

Please see the attached letter.

Thank you.

Kris Gusmini

ATTACHMENT

Jim Ostrow,
July 20, 2022

I spoke briefly at the last public hearing. I wish to make two additional points. First, I find the claim that a dammed river is somehow more pleasing aesthetically to be extremely odd - and the employment of the "it's been that way so long it's iconic" logic to be rather disturbing, when for instance one considers the employment of that sort of logic to the detriment of marginalized peoples (which I assume is the point being made by your indigenous representative).

But maybe more important, I live on Phillips Street, surrounded by Save the Dam signs erected by wonderful, progressive neighbors whom I am sure share my distress at the disregard for or, in fact, outright attacks on scientific reasoning that we have witnessed in this country. Yet they seem for reasons I can't understand to be ignoring the mountain of clear combination of natural and social scientific evidence on this issue, presented so well by highly informed professionals yesterday.

I implore the committee to follow the science and remove the dam.

One additional request - if at all possible, I hope safety at the site is considered in the removal design. I see adults letting young children running free by the unfenced, steep drop by the river's edge; scary stuff!

Jim Ostrow, 5 Phillips Street

Paul Keyes
July 20, 2022

My name is Paul Keyes and my partner, Karen Benoit, and I live at 35 Pleasant Street. The dam and spillway are a scenic and enjoyable part of our neighborhood as well as the larger Natick community, and they need to be preserved.

Based on the information I have seen, the removal of the dam could have a significant environmental impact on the area. With projected water levels dropping to 0.5-1 foot during many times of the year the entire esthetic of the area will be changed - some will say destroyed. Additionally, at those depths there will be no canoeing or kayaking as there is today. In fact, at those levels I have to wonder what the effect will be on the fish population.

I understand this is a very complicated, and costly issue. Given that, I would encourage committee to take a closer look at the environmental and visual ramifications of removing the dam.

Karen and I are strongly in favor of retention and repair of the dam and preservation of a historic, beautiful landmark. I can also say that 100% of the people I've spoken to feel the same. We believe that the Committee should be aware of this overwhelming support for repair of the dam by the people of this area.

Roger Scott

July 20, 2022

I had to work yesterday but I caught the end of the Zoom meeting.

Ona wanted to write up the "deal" quickly.

I want to see in that write up, a breakdown of all the costs to the Natick taxpayer, signed off by those contracted to do the work. A written explanation by the town engineer and the contractor, how the price \$500,000 in December 2019 increased 200% to \$1,500,000 (inflation rate 2.5%, 2.5%, 7.5%). Full disclosure of all moneys that have changed hands in the preparation "of the process" to get from December 2019 to July 2022. Signed "no allowance documentation" for cost overruns related to the project. Full disclosure of any money paid to town employees whether directly, or through campaign contributions, featuring signed "under penalty of perjury documents" that no town representative or employee has received money or gift payments from any beneficiary of the dam removal project. Full disclosure showing that no money or gifts has been paid to any environmental group, person, or promoter of dam removal to said project. Any and all violations will be pursued by the Town of Natick with criminal prosecution. All of this presented, to be signed off by the Board of Select persons, the town legal counsel, and the town of Natick town meeting members if necessary. I will follow up with the Select Board and the media if necessary.

Sincerely,
Roger Scott
40 Water St.
Natick, Ma. 01760

Abby Brown

July 20, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, I am writing in support of restoring the river in South Natick and removing the dam. There are two stakeholders whose views have far more standing than any other: the ecology of the Charles River and the Natick Nipmucs. The interests of others in the sounds, views, property values and other considerations pale in comparison to the duty we, the Town of Natick, owe to take this step of restoration and undo a small part of the harm that was done by colonial settlement here in Natick.

The dam has, for too long, choked the life from this stretch of the Charles River. We should embrace this opportunity to improve our stewardship of the river and do a thoughtful removal of the spillway, thereby saving the trees on the dam and allowing the ecological systems on either side of the barrier to heal the imbalance that has persisted so long.

The Nipmuc have a cultural memory of a healthy, life-filled Quinobequin and a relationship with the river that is also in balance. We should listen and learn.

Thank you,
Abby Brown
Broads Ave, Natick MA

Andrea Masi-Phelps
July 20, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, I would like to submit a public comment in favor of removing the spillway of the dam in south Natick and restoring the river. We should respect the wishes of the Natick Nipmuc and other Indigenous people who have said to remove the dam. They have stewarded this land and the river for far longer than the dam has been there.

I appreciate the research and work that the advisory committee has put into this issue. Per your findings, restoring the river is the more sustainable option, both financially for the town and environmentally for the river and surrounding wildlife. As a young resident of Natick (26), I hope that your decision and recommendation leaves my generation and those to come with a healthy river that we can enjoy long into the future.

Thank you,
Andrea Masi-Phelps
38 Pond St.
Natick, MA 01760

Dr. Marianne V. Moore
July 20, 2022

Dear Members of the Charles River Dam Advisory Committee: My name is Marianne Moore, and I am a freshwater scientist living in Sherborn. During my 45 years of conducting research on lakes and rivers in the USA and Siberia, I have advised the town of Sherborn, state agencies, the US Congress, the Russian federal government, and UNESCO's World Heritage Center about environmental issues facing freshwater ecosystems. I am also a recent member of the Advisory Committee for Mass Audubon's Broadmoor Sanctuary in Natick.

I write today, in my capacity as an aquatic scientist, to strongly echo Mass Audubon's position supporting the removal of the spillway in South Natick. Spillway removal will generate numerous benefits for Natick residents and those living along the river. These benefits, described in detail by others elsewhere, include economic savings for the town of Natick as well as improvements to the river's water quality and biota and enhanced climate resilience (i.e., reduced risk of flooding and, in drought years, a substantial reduction and likely elimination of toxic algal blooms and methane emissions upstream of the spillway).

Among the concerns of those wanting to "save the dam" are the loss of a beautiful waterfall and fears of unsightly mudflats developing upstream after spillway removal occurs. Importantly, however, the waterfall can be replaced with an equally attractive waterscape, and mudflats will not occur. Yes, the river will shrink in width exposing muddy sediments, but these 'mudflats' will be colonized almost immediately by rapidly growing plants. Most of these plants will be weeds or

invasives, but with appropriate management and guidance for those whose properties abut the river, plantings of buttonbush, sweet pepper bush, and alders could occur. These plantings will attract many different birds and other wildlife providing a beautiful natural area for people to enjoy in South Natick.

In sum, both those advocating for spillway removal and those petitioning to 'save the dam' want a beautiful river. This can be attained by removing the spillway. I urge the Charles River Dam Advisory Committee and the Natick Select Board to take appropriate action.

Sincerely,

Dr. Marianne V. Moore (she/her)
Frost Professor Emerita in Environmental Science &
Professor Emerita of Biological Sciences
Dept of Biological Sciences
Wellesley College
Wellesley, MA 02481-0832
USA

H. Jay McInerney

July 21, 2022

We are highly against removal of the dam.

Considering all the facts it is best to improve it as planned.

There is no doubt, simply. A logical analysis of the turtles and fish and bird life upstream and down as well as the aesthetic and financial costs is overwhelming !

Reminds us of the effort to close Sassamon Trace Golf course which many of us opposed and succeeded in preventing.

That proposal would have wasted innumerable resources and left the resource dead. Would have been shameful.

Thus, we agree with the thinking of a majority of Natick's and surrounding towns' residents that the dam should remain.

Respectfully and cordially,
H. Jay McInerney

Toni Saponaro

July 21, 2022

I have lived in So Natick since 1973 off and on ..a wonderful place too live Took

my baby by the falls met my husband for lunch by the falls there are towns in this country that have places like this but fewer and fewer don't take away the falls The look and sound such an important part of natick heritage Toni Saponaro

John Kaufman

July 21, 2022

As we face a drought season I wonder why we could not put to use the water at the upper Dam ...seems an awful waste to lose 2,000,000 gallons of water and knock down the dam... Surely these engineers could figure out a way to put this to use at a time when there's going to be constant water shortages with the building going on in Natick and the commercial buildings at the mall that will use millions of gallons of water what a shame... but at this point it's not even an option... Do me a favor when you do knock down the Dam could you play " Dirty Water " on the loudspeakers? Seems fitting
John K

Smitha Radhakrishnan

July 22, 2022

Dear Charles River Dam Advisory Committee, As a Natick resident of 8 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.

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,
Smitha Radhakrishnan
2A Bellevue Rd.
Natick, MA

Karen Mallozzi

July 22, 2022

I fully endorse removing the dam and restoring the river to its original condition. I also support the Nipmuc people who were denied the use of the original river.

We enjoy coming from West Natick to the dam area and are not fearful of change.

It is also the fiscally responsible decision for the Town.

All parties to the discussion did a wonderful job.

Karen Mallozzi
chair, Natick Neighbors Compost
facilitator and participant, LifeLong Learning at Regis College
Friends of the Morse Institute Library, past VP
retired Director of Adult Religious Education, St. Bridget Parish, Framingham

Peter and Tresanne Ainsworth

July 22, 2022

My family lives here because of the South Natick Dam.

My wife and I met in 1989 as freshman at Boston College. We were married and expecting our first child by the end of sophomore year. That child spent her first year of life in the hospital. First at Boston Children's and then in Pittsburgh, for a life-saving, experimental transplant. We didn't know if she would ever be able to experience the outdoors, but thankfully she has. When I graduated from college, my father in law gave me a used, 17 foot Old Town Canoe. We rented in West Roxbury and would throw it on the car most weekends to explore different areas of the Charles. We struggled financially, and this was an essentially free activity. More importantly, it was a way to get our daughter, and later her little sister, out to "the country" to explore nature. Our favorite spot to put in was at the South Natick Dam. Not only was the park beautiful, but it provided access to the Broadmoor bird sanctuary, a truly beautiful stretch of the river. We used to imagine living in one of the houses along the river one day. We didn't need a mansion (there are some whoppers); we just liked imagining a home on the river we loved so much. We even picked our favorite: 96 Eliot Street (we had to drive around to figure out which house it was from the road).

Fast forward some 25 years. Our girls were mostly grown, my wife and I both finished our education, we owned a little house on Route 16 in Holliston (still canoeing in the Old Town), and

somehow -with the help of a lot of people and a good measure of luck- were in a very different place financially than we were when we started out. With our girls done with high school we wanted to move closer to our jobs. We looked and looked, but could not forget 96 Eliot. We decided to use one of the six notecards left to my wife by her grandmother, Theresa "Lovey" Foerster, to write a note to the owners. We told them our story, and asked if they had any interest in selling, and stuck the note in the mailbox. They called the next day. Mercy and Bats Wheeler had lived at 96 for 40 years. A wonderful couple and true stewards of the river. They sadly needed to move for health reasons, but welcomed us, and with a handshake agreed to sell their home once they had found a facility that could help them. It took over a year but we miraculously were able to move into our actual dream home. We thank Lovey.

Not a day goes by that we do not pinch ourselves and marvel that we get to live in this beautiful home, on this beautiful spot on the river. We tend this spot, and hope to live here until we can't just as the Wheelers did before us. This is a long way of saying that we have a deeply spiritual connection to this river.

When the issue of the dam came up, we decided from the start that we would do what was best for the river. If the water line changed a little, and we had some muck to wade through to drag the Old Town out, so be it. Maybe the town would let us put out a small dock or something. We were encouraged by the repeated representations at town meetings that there would be very little change to the river, and that there would be no noticeable change to the water levels beyond the first quarter mile (about the Sargent Footbridge). We would miss the beautiful waterfall, but if it would help the wildlife by allowing new species access to the river upstream, then it would be worth it. The feelings of the Nipmuc, whose land we all live on, were of course very compelling too.

Then, about two weeks before the advisory committee's vote was scheduled, a new report came out. This report differed **DRASTICALLY** from the prior studies, and the map provided showed that water levels would drop to a mere 6"-1 foot well beyond the footbridge for much of the year. How could this happen? Why was this study not done and released from the beginning? We felt completely betrayed (I know this was nobody's intent but that is how it feels). Instead of having essentially the same river but with no spillway and more wildlife, we are going to decimate the thriving ecosystem that is right here, right now, and block boat access to Broadmoor and beyond for so many people. If the Charles is reduced to a muddy, rocky stream, how will the new species even navigate it? What will happen to wildlife living there now?

I am asking that further studies be conducted to answer these and other questions (e.g., oxygenation provided by the spillway, health effects of exposed sediment). I am concerned that high level decisions on a 50,000 foot, macro level that dams are bad for the environment, have been made and accepted by large groups of people, including the Nipmuc, without actually looking closely at what removing this particular dam will do to the flora and fauna living here now. Removing dams that completely block water flow (as opposed to the run-of-the-river dam that we have) is understandably a good thing. And removing dams like ours is good too, unless it creates a much less habitable and navigable stretch of river, as the new study suggests it will here. "Returning the river to its natural state" is nice from a romantic perspective, not if it completely transforms the river into essentially a stream (or worse, a dry creek bed at times). We have to be realistic about what this change will do, and the people of Natick deserve to know what they are giving up and what we are doing to the river if we remove the spillway. At a minimum the committee should recommend additional studies so the town can make a fully informed decision.

Unfortunately, consensus has been built over the past couple years based on incorrect/false information (that there will be minimal change to water levels). Even though that was not the intent, it has influenced many, many people, as it did my wife and me before the 11th hour study came out.

We have loved this river for nearly 30 years, and have enjoyed the incredible privilege of sharing it with the abundant wildlife here for the past five. We want others to share in this experience, whether they live along the river, or trek out to “the country” from West Roxbury as we did so many years ago. The solace the park and the river provide are hard to come by. We need to preserve it, so we need to preserve the dam.

Please do the right thing.

Thank you,
Peter and Treseanne Ainsworth
96 Eliot Street
Natick, MA 01760

Lisa Feldman
July 22, 2022

South Natick Dam Advisory Committee: Agreeing with the commentary from July 19th, the aspects are threefold: economics, aesthetics, and ethics. To be concise economically, it would be financially irresponsible to burden the present and future taxpayers with the unknown mushrooming cost of dam replacement, maintenance, inspection and possible failure. The removal is a reliable figure. Further, there are no monies for the landscape architecture to the affected areas nor, parking for vastly increased imagined usage.

Aesthetics: Beauty is in the eye of beholder, so very applicable. The concrete spillway is the enforcement of the victor’s rule. I see the abduction to Deer Island, the death from starvation and exposure of children, families gone. Turn-of-the-century photos and wedding pics are the window-dressing to the watery confinement. From a caller on Tuesday, “Why isn’t a natural river as pretty as cement?”

Ethics: Tikun Olam translates to the repair and improvement of the world. This is our unique opportunity to lead Natick and set example to the surrounding communities: the path to acknowledging reparation to the Indigenous Peoples. We demonstrate our respect for the Nipmuc nation, as they choose to “Respect the River”. A view that follows the best environmental practices, noted by the representatives of multiple leading environmental groups last Tuesday.

Recreational access such as kayaking, is enriching. However, character building is transformative. What better way to teach our children to be citizens of the world?

In Appreciation,
Lisa Feldman 113 Pleasant St.

Mary Beth Cotter

July 22, 2022

Dear Committee, I have heard that if the dam is removed, the water level will be drastically reduced and there will be no opportunity for boating or other activity on the river. Please comment on this effect as well as other effects including public health and safety.

Although this comment is posted after 10AM, I request it be accepted as there was literally no time to post since the original notice was posted on 5:49 on July 21.

Regards,

Mary Beth Cotter

resident of South Natick

Richard Subber

July 21, 2022

The dam should be removed.

Richard Subber
46 Union Street
Natick, MA 01760

Laura Nicholson

July 22, 2022

I truly hope the committee recommends the removal of the dam.

There are numerous reasons to remove the dam, all of which are concrete and serious. It is more economically prudent (as objectively defined by projected cost to the town) and it is environmentally advantageous (as backed up by scientific reports from reputable organizations).

In favor of restoring the dam is essentially the fact that people who live nearby like it. I don't deny that the spillway is pretty, or that the sound of falling water is calming, but when weighed against hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars and the health of the environment that we all live in? The balance is clearly in favor of removing the dam as the best course of option for the wider community, despite the loud vocal opposition of a small group.

-Laura Nicholson
Natick resident

David Hoffman

July 24, 2022

Hello, I hope you are doing well and enjoying your summer!

I'm writing to share my thoughts on the South Natick dam. My family and I spend several days a month enjoying the beautiful dam. Please consider repairing the dam. Preserving this beautiful landscape and the Charles River is a real differentiator to Natick and is a draw to new potential families considering a move to our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jill Licata

July 24, 2022

I hope the South Natick dam will be repaired and preserved. It is one of the things that enticed me to move to South Natick last year since it's such a beautiful spot to sit and enjoy the river and surroundings. It attracts people from all around the area. Repairing it should be a high priority for the community.

Thank you,
Jill Licata
29 Davis Brook Drive
South Natick