

Maple Corner Community Center Board Meeting July 21, 2021

Present: President Dirk Van Susteren, Andrew Nemethy, Steve Sweeney, Jamie Moorby, Bill Powell Peter Burke, Carolyn Morton.

Visitors: Marge Sweeney, Colleen Bloom, Marialisa Calta.

The board met in person at the MCCC to listen to developments on renewed efforts to repair the stone wall dam that is critical to maintaining water levels on the community's prized recreational resource, Curtis Pond. Two residents with properties on the pond, Marge Sweeney and Colleen Bloom, update the board on news about the dam.

Sweeney first explained some past history. Concerns about a dam failure arose in 2003 based on growing leaks in the stone structure. Failure of the dam and its impact on recreation, as well as property values and potential catastrophic downstream damage if the lake suddenly drained, led to a three-year effort to research dam ownership and make repairs with state assistance. That occurred from 2003-2006, she said. Efforts were stymied, however, by complex and unresolved legal ownership issues on the dam.

Sweeney said a renewed effort began in July of 2020 and were "trying to pick up and go from there" based on the

efforts ended in 2006.

The current effort from lakeside owners is focusing on presenting arguments to the selectboard that its participation in repair of the dam and preservation of the lake should be a town-wide effort, and not just an effort by lakeside property owners. Sweeney, who provided extensive research she has done, outlined critical facts to back that position.

First, the loss of the lake in a dam failure - a growing risk heightened by intense climate change rainstorms - would remove a public beach, key recreation resource for fishing, boating and swimming, threaten the village of Maple Corner, especially the Maple Corner Community Store, which is next to the brook just downstream of the dam.

Second, she noted that if the dam failed, the drop in property values from the homes on the lake would be a major hit to town revenues. Sweeney said “conservatively” it would mean a 25% loss to home values around the lake, and a \$2.3 million loss in tax revenue over the next 20 years to Calais. She also noted that if the dam did fail, there are indications the state would not back its rebuilding, meaning a permanent loss of a town resource.

Sweeney stated flatly that after doing a fiscal analysis of the situation, “fixing is cheaper than letting it fail.”

According to Sweeney, there is urgency now because of federal infrastructure funds becoming available; very low interest rates to bond to do the work; and state support at this time for doing the work. Also, the current selectboard appears to favor moves to address the longstanding dam situation, an important factor.

She said a key issue, and why the Curtis Pond Association wanted to address the MCCC board, is that the association has concluded a private organization cannot undertake the project and get federal funds. “We found that we can’t get it done as a private organization,” she said. As a result they are reaching out to other entities in town like the MCCC, and have met and gotten encouragement from the Calais Selectboard.

MCCC manager Jamie Moorby, who is working with the lakeside association on the renewed dam reconstruction plans, explained that the MCCC could have an important role to play if progress occurs on the project this time around. The board in 2003 approved and set aside \$30,000 for the dam reconstruction project at that time, which it has never spent. Moorby explained that should approval of a reconstruction move ahead, some preliminary costs, perhaps \$60,000 to \$100,000, might be needed and the MCCC funds would be an important contribution at that time.

Moorby also broached the idea of the MCCC being a

partner in promoting the project or helping with fundraising as part of its community building focus and mission in Maple Corner.

Marialisa Calta, who was a member of the MCCC board in 2003, said she did not recall any stipulations on the \$30,000 appropriated then that would preclude spending it on preparations to enable dam reconstruction. Board President VanSusteren thanked Bloom and Sweeney for their presentation, noting “we’ve got something to think about.” The board asked them to keep MCCC updated on progress with the plans.

Artesian Well and other updates

Treasurer Bill Powell, who is overseeing plans to revamp the MCCC current shared water system by drilling a well for the center, said well driller Manosh was swamped and could not provide a date this year for when it would be able to do the work. He guessed that it might not happen until next year and said that was OK since the project was “not pressing” in his view.

MCCC manager Jamie Moorby said the refrigerator was not working in the MCCC kitchen and a repair person was scheduled to evaluate the situation. She also reported that a new modern key box system for the front door would be installed that would be easier and more secure than the existing one.

Finally the board unanimously approved a revised and updated rate structure for rentals and use of the MCCC worked out by an adhoc subcommittee.

A brief discussion followed on Moorby's request for advice on a request by a private school group to rent the MCCC for the academic year fulltime from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and what rate should be charged. Moorby was asked to get more details on how the rental would work, more specific dates on usage and what the group was willing to pay for rental and terms of payment.

The Board adjourned at around 9 p.m.