



Warner's Pond Task Force
141 Keyes Road
Thursday, January 16, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Task Force members:

- Vickie Alani
- Paul Boehm
- Malcolm Bryant
- Ann Clifford
- Jeff Collins
- Bruce Curliss
- Christine Denaro
- Keith Hannon
- Mark Howell
- Delia Kaye/Bert Comins
- Bill Kemeza
- Liz Morrison Howe
- David Owen
- Samiksha Poudel
- Sven Weber

The Warner's Pond Task Force held its 17th meeting on January 16, 2025 beginning at 6:00 pm at the DPLM Building at 141 Keyes Road, Concord, MA 01742, with an option to join online via Zoom. Task Force members and members of the public were in attendance in person and on Zoom, with Task Force members Ann Clifford, Bruce Curliss, Jeff Quick and Bert Comins joining online. The meeting agenda, slides, and video recording are available on the [Warner's Pond Task Force website](#). The meeting agenda and slides are also included below as appendices.

Welcome and Updates

Christine Denaro, Task Force co-chair, opened the meeting at 6:02 and took a roll call of members. All members were in attendance. Chris identified the goals for the meeting: Clarify timeline and share feedback on improving and finalizing the work group proposals.

Approve December 17, 2024 Minutes

Christine asked if the group was ready to approve the December 17, 2024 minutes. Sven Weber made a motion to approve the December 17, 2024 minutes. Paul Boehm seconded, and the minutes were approved as written with one abstention (Bill Kemeza).

Public Comment (limited to 2 minutes per person)

Bill asked if anyone was interested in providing public comment and named ground rules:

- Be respectful in your comments
- Avoid personal attacks
- Keep comments to no more than 2 minutes

Before opening the meeting to public comments, Bill said that he wanted to make a few comments of his own. He said that he saw the group moving forward to develop the best case scenarios for each of the proposals, and that Task Force members were all advocates of all of the scenarios, even if members each have different personal preferences. He noted that all 3 alternatives are good, and that the Task Force members are reasonable and rational, and get along well with each other. But as the group gets closer to decision-making, it is inevitable that feelings will get more intense and everyone should be aware of that. Bill added that, moving

forward, this was something he would also want the public to be aware of. He then opened the meeting for public comment.

Denise Gilbert, 5 Concord Greene

I have more of a general comment than specifically about the dam. I was thinking about the first time I saw Warner's Pond and it was a complete surprise. It was unexpected, walking distance from the businesses of West Concord, across the street from a playground. It was a treasure trove of wildlife and local history, and is a treasure. Yes it is in trouble, and it is worthy of the time and energy of the committee. Please keep on with all the original plans and intentions, maintain the dam and the fish ladder, dredge the pond. Continue with research for ways to save this little pond. Thank you.

Peter Alden, 11 Riverside Ave.

I am formerly with the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Mass. Audubon and a lot of other organizations, and a bird watcher. Warner's Pond is in my Christmas Bird Count area. We do it every year for 65 years. I'm all for leaving the pond as it is. When you look at the scenarios, this is what is going to be growing there. All those mud flats are going to be growing 10-foot tall phragmites. It is spreading everywhere there is moisture in the soil. If you look around where Route 2 crosses the Sudbury River at Emerson Hospital, you'll see this stuff. It is extremely difficult to remove. I was studying a pond on the west side of Bedford many years ago and it had cattails and various freshwater plants to provide food for lots of birds and animals, and then I noticed purple loosestrife taking over. Purple loosestrife has no seeds for any animals or birds. These things (phragmites) provide no food for anything. And so when I see in my mind a little shallow channel of Nashoba Brook, and our vision of a beautiful meadow of wildflowers, I think it's going to be 100 percent phragmites. So I'm all for keeping the dam as is. There's still fish in there, regardless of the invasives. For me and other birdwatchers, we would love to keep it exactly as it is rather than seeing a sea of phragmites. Thank you.

Status Update of Task Force Progress and Next Steps

Rachel introduced this topic by noting that Toby was traveling and that it would be especially important for Task Force members to avoid talking over each other because the minutes would be compiled from the recordings. She commended the Task Force for the amount of work and time they had put into writing, researching and revising the proposals. She then went on to discuss the timeline and budget, explaining that CBI's budget for facilitating the Task Force reached its end in January. The town has authorized a budget extension that CBI estimates will cover its work for 4 Task Force meetings and 1 public meeting. She wanted the Task Force to be aware of the time limitation and be as efficient as possible in the next phases of work.

Turning to the next topic, Rachel referred back to Bill's introductory comments about the work groups operating as advocacy groups. She noted that it was expected that there would be conflicts about parts of the proposals, and it was important to remember that the proposals were not the Task Force's recommendations. The proposals represent the best case scenarios that can be presented to the public and to each other, but they are not the result of the group's deliberations. She emphasized that Task Force members needed to be comfortable with all the statements in the proposals, even if it wasn't their view of ideal language. It was important for the group to remain aware that reasonable and intelligent people can disagree about facts, so she

encouraged the group to focus on revisions or edits to address those conflicts so that the work of finalizing the proposals can move forward. She explained that she and Toby had worked on editing all 3 proposals to address layout and flow, as well as making suggestions about possible language changes. Regarding next steps in the process, she introduced the suggestion that a small working group might be an effective method for addressing some of the areas of disagreement outside of the full Task Force meetings. She added that this approach is frequently used in facilitation processes. The approach would be that a small group of 4-5 Task Force members selected by the group could meet separately to work on issues that couldn't be easily resolved in the full group. Rachel or Toby would facilitate the meetings. The small group's recommendations would be brought back to the Task Force for review and approval. Rachel noted that it would be important for the Task Force to feel that it could trust the small group representatives to speak for their interests. Bill commented that this idea came out of the planning group and he thought there were several issues that would benefit from being discussed more deeply in a smaller group. He mentioned that Jeff, Keith, Chris and Paul might be in the group, and then went on to describe in more detail about some of the issues in conflict that could be raised in the small group. Vickie commented that she thought the idea of coming up with language that everyone could live with was useful. Malcolm and David had questions about the overall process, but were supportive. Rachel asked if the Task Force was willing to establish a small group. Bill asked if anyone would make a motion. David Owen made a motion to set up a small group; Liz seconded. Malcolm commented that Bill had suggested 4 people for the small group and suggested that there be 5. Bill and others agreed that there should be an odd number. The motion to establish a small group to reconcile the 3 proposals passed with all in favor.

Review and Discussion of Work Group Proposals

Rachel showed several of the slides listing some of the issues that she and Toby had identified as areas of conflict or in need of clarification. Group members had some questions about the slides. Chris raised the point that she thought the Task Force had wanted to review the dam removal proposal at this meeting, since it had not had a chance to do so in depth at the last meeting. Rachel acknowledged that Chris was correct and that she had accidentally skipped that item. Task Force members agreed that they wanted to review the dam removal proposal first, and began a page-by-page review of the most recent proposal.

In its review of the dam removal proposal, the Task Force discussed the descriptions and explanations used for a number of issues and concerns in the dam removal proposal, as well as concerns and suggestions that could be applied to all 3 proposals. Suggestions for edits and revisions were offered, and several topics were specifically identified for referral to the small group for further discussion. Another topic related to the budget resulted in clarification that there is approximately \$2.6 million appropriated for dredging of the Pond. Jeff asked if that money was available for all of the proposed alternatives, and Delia responded that those funds could be requested to be reallocated to any of the proposals. Other topics discussed included:

As it began its review, the Task Force agreed to add "contingent on Talbot Mills Dam" to the footnote on Page 21.

On Page 22, the group discussed greenhouse gas (GHG) and Liz commented that dam removal is generally viewed as an improvement to GHG removal; it is very small but the workgroup wanted

to acknowledge that. Jeff and Malcolm explained in more detail the mechanisms involved. After discussion about possible ways to reconcile the language to address concerns raised by other members, the suggestion was made that the description be revised to say “marginal improvement.”

Bill asked whether Brook trout are actually in the Nashoba River. Malcolm said that he caught 2 Brook trout 2 years ago. Jeff and Malcolm explained how dam removal could have an influence. Chris asked about the distinction between cold water and cool water streams in the areas upstream of Nashoba Brook. The group delved into maps of the area and Rachel suggested that they move onto the next topic. The Task Force agreed that the issues of fisheries habitat should be discussed by the small group.

David brought up the statement saying the project would restore the natural environment of the 17th century. Members of the dam removal work group acknowledged that a reference to creating or improving the riverine environment would be a better description and the Task Force agreed.

David also raised a question about how much wildlife habitat diversity would change after dam removal. He suggested adding a table with a matrix of species that could be compared. Vickie and Bill thought that might be helpful. Jeff noted there was a list of fish species in the proposal, and Bill asked whether the other proposals had included a list. Delia commented that herring species would have access to the upstream areas under the dam removal option. She added that the 2012 report included a list of fish species observed in the pond. Jeff pointed out that the dam removal proposal had a table of habitat types that show changes in the size of resource areas and suggested including the list of fish species from DER. David wondered how to quantify the changes in wildlife habitat diversity in the table, and whether there would be an increase in diversity versus an increase in invasives.

Keith commented that there was a study on beaver dams and their effects on migratory fish, and that there was a significant presence of beaver dams on the Nashoba. He offered to share that paper.

Rachel summarized the discussion so far, confirming that the Task Force had agreed to send the fisheries issue to the small group, and that the wildlife habitat diversity issue would be included. Paul suggested that qualifying statements be added, such as "possibly" or "likely" to indicate uncertainty. Rachel commented that in addition to Paul's suggestions, another method would be to attribute information to the source, such as EA, without adding any comment from the Task Force indicating agreement or disagreement, and letting readers judge for themselves.

Chris commented that the proposal suggests there will be an increase in biodiversity after dam removal, but thought it was just a change in the types of resource areas that would be present. In the dredging proposal, she pointed out that a shallow marsh would be created. She said it wasn't clear how the removal of the dam would increase biodiversity. Jeff responded that marsh and wetland areas have a greater value for biodiversity, with habitat for more native species, including invertebrates. Chris said she was concerned that species that use open water now would be reduced with dam removal, and asked if the dam removal proposal was making a

judgment that dam removal would be better for biodiversity. Jeff responded that dam removal would result in higher ecosystem value for wildlife habitat. He also agreed that with the reduction of open water, the species that use open water would be reduced. Keith commented that Concord has a lot of wetland areas, but less open water that can be utilized by species such as Pied Billed Grebes or bald eagles, and that looking town-wide, there is a need to keep open water habitat. Rachel asked if a language change could address this concern. Bill said he thought the small group should try to come up with language that the Task Force could live with. The Task Force confirmed that the small group should discuss the biodiversity topic.

Vickie pointed out the figures related to estimated maintenance costs over 50 years, and suggested that all the proposals use the same language. The group agreed with a suggestion that the costs be annualized using today's dollars. Malcolm added that the cost of dam inspections was not included.

Liz commented that the rationales in each of the proposals should be stated positively. Bill agreed and asked the group to move on in its review. Jeff commented on the Gerow Park improvements and asked if all the proposals should treat those in a similar way, with the same estimated costs. The group agreed with that change.

Bill asked to look at Figure 2. Jeff explained that the Figure shows EA's estimated channel location. He asked what David thought in terms of its proximity to Scout Island. David said he would like to get the Scouts' input on that. Jeff said the intention was to manipulate the channel closer to Commonwealth Ave. He observed that the Figure seemed to indicate that there would be a much longer trip for the Scouts to make from Commonwealth Ave. to their landing spot on the Island. Mark suggested adding more detail to the legend on the figure so that predicted water depths would be clearer. Jeff went on to explain that EA had used upstream conditions (upstream of Warner's Pond) as their analog condition when estimating the post-dam removal location of the channel. Keith questioned why EA didn't use downstream conditions. He added that he thought that there wouldn't be enough water to boat over to Scout Island. He said he was concerned that promises were being made that couldn't be lived up to. Rachel acknowledged the various perspectives and suggested this might be addressed in the section on risks and uncertainties. Delia explained that EA's maps show the outline of the channel and that you can see that it follows that path. Jeff said that the workgroup could work on revising the language to reflect some of the uncertainties. Rachel summarized, confirming that this sounded like the dam removal work group was going to address this. Bill interjected that he thought the small group should tackle it. Mark thought it was logical to use the upstream section as a comparison, because it's a place people could go out and look at and could understand it. Paul said he thought the uncertainties were really important, and that the group needed to be able to get to a point where they could live with the uncertainties. He felt that articulating the uncertainties was very important for the group as a deliberating body. In responding to a question from Vickie about the structure of the proposals, Paul said that he thought the proposals should make the best case, and uncertainties should be listed in their own section because that makes it easier for the reader. Vickie said she agreed with that approach.

Regarding Figure 3, on page 27 depicting the channel profile, the Task Force generally agreed that the profile is hard to understand. The question was referred to the dam removal work group to consider.

Moving to the next issue, Chris asked how the channel would be deepened. Malcolm explained that the work group used one of SumCo's projects where they did stream restoration to make sure the stream had meanders, and described some of the techniques SumCo had used. The intention was that this work would be part of the dam removal work. Jeff said the work group needed to add some detail to this section. Keith asked about the details of the SumCo project, and how long the channel was. Malcolm said they used a cost per foot; Keith said he thought the cost would be higher. Malcolm agreed, saying it would ultimately have to be clarified through an actual bid. Keith suggested that more detail be added about this. Vickie said she thought that could be done.

Jeff turned to the section about Gerow Park improvements, noting that this work is being handled by the Recreation Department and said the work group was unsure how to describe it. Chris suggested that all the proposals describe it the same way. Members agreed that this made sense.

Delia raised a previous question about funding sources and said that a lot of the costs were capital funds. She explained that the dredging proposal states that there is \$2.6 million available. She suggested it would be helpful if that was included in all of the proposals. The statement could say that there was \$2.6 million allocated for dredging, and to state at the same time that those funds could be allocated to any of the proposals. Bill and others agreed to this. Vickie asked what the process was. Delia explained that a request to reallocate CPA funds would need to come from the CPC, and capital fund reallocation would be a recommendation from the Natural Resources Division, both for approval at Town Meeting.

Keith commented that it would be fair to include a 10% escalation cost for all costs. He also reminded the group of the additional work EA had done for the Task Force and that those costs should be accounted for. Delia asked if these costs would be broken out. Rachel asked if the group thought it would be helpful to capture the total costs of the work of the Task Force, rather than breaking it down into costs specific to each proposal. Several group members agreed with that approach, noting that some of the cost information benefited the entire Task Force. After a short discussion, Rachel asked if there was agreement by the Task Force for that approach, where there would be a section showing the total costs expended in the work of the Task Force and what the purpose of each expenditure was for. Task Force members generally agreed.

In closing this discussion, Rachel returned to the slides to let the group know that the slides would be available for Task Force members to refer to, and explained that some of the issues listed were specifically from the comments that Keith had made. Bill asked if Keith had any other comments. Rachel asked the group if they were comfortable with the small group taking on additional issues besides those that were discussed at tonight's meeting. Liz and Vickie both expressed that the full Task Force and the work groups should know what the small group was working on. Further discussion among the members resulted in an agreement that the small group would discuss fisheries, habitat biodiversity, costs, and channel depths. Vickie asked if

recreation was going to the small group, but members pointed out they had not discussed recreation at all.

Further discussion followed about the process of reviewing the proposals. Bill said that the first two proposals would need to be reviewed again. Rachel asked the group to send any and all comments on all of the proposals to CBI so Rachel and Toby could track them, but that didn't preclude members from bringing up the comments in Task Force meetings. Several members pointed out that recreation still needed to be discussed. Jeff asked that the tasks of the sub-group be finite, and that new issues not be added.

Chris summarized that CBI would incorporate all the comments into the proposals, and then bring them back to the full Task Force for another review. Rachel agreed. Bill added that the other 2 workgroup proposals would have to go through the same review process as dam removal. Vickie agreed, and Rachel pointed out that it would not prevent Task Force members from reading and sending her and Toby their comments on all of the proposals. At the conclusion of this discussion, Task Force members agreed that they would submit any other comments about all of the proposals in writing to Rachel and Toby, who would incorporate them into revised drafts and share them with the group.

Public Workshop Planning, Task Force Member Topics of Interest, and Next Steps

Rachel shared that the next Task Force meeting had been set for January 30 at Harvey Wheeler and that one of the items to be discussed would be planning for the public meeting. She said that Toby had been working on a brochure that was still rather long. Delia interjected that the mailing would have to be limited to a 2-sided postcard with a QR code link to the website. Group members discussed this and decided that summaries of the proposals would not be needed because the proposals had much more information. Vickie commented that it would be interesting to have the postcard say that the meeting would include presentation of 3 proposals with cost estimates. Task Force members agreed this would be helpful in getting participation. In terms of the date of the public meeting, Rachel said that February 24 had been identified as a possible date. The group discussed possible venues, and Mark suggested the Town House because the meeting could be live-streamed. There was general agreement with this suggestion. Chris and Bill suggested a time frame of 7 - 9 pm. Vickie commented that the meeting should be on zoom and be recorded so that people could hear the presentations. Delia said the meeting could be live-streamed, but participation could be much more complicated if zoom was used in addition to live streaming. She said that the Select Board used a hybrid approach; the group agreed that would be preferred. Bill asked how many meetings there would be before the public meeting, and Rachel said there was just 1 scheduled at this point. Paul said a meeting was definitely needed before the public meeting. After discussion about dates, the group settled on setting another meeting on February 11. Vickie asked if the meeting could be moved to 6:30; Bill asked the group if that would be possible, with the meeting running until 9 PM. There was general agreement. Rachel noted that there would be another Task Force meeting after the public meeting, and that the group would have to move quickly to deliberations since there would only be two meetings left.

Rachel gave a brief summary of the status of discussions on the public meeting, noting that the date of February 24 had been identified at a previous Task Force meeting, but that date was still

in flux. The group considered possible dates and locations and settled on February 27 from 7 - 9 PM, at the Town House, and would be live streamed the same way that the Select Board manages its meetings.

Public Comment (limited to 2 minutes per person)

Bill asked if anyone was interested in providing public comment and named ground rules:

- Be respectful in your comments
- Avoid personal attacks
- Keep comments to no more than 2 minutes

There were no public comments. With no further business, Chris adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.