

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairperson Rich Dionne

Members Present: Richard Dionne, Leslie Bowen, Mike Lamoureux, Joe Pedro, Ron Lapierre

Members Absent: Cameron Genereux

Guests: Present - Roberta Lacey, Jeremy Bailey, as well as members of the public via Zoom

1) Approval of prior meeting's Minutes: Motion was made to accept the June Minutes with 2 minor amendments located in sections #3 & #4, and underlined in the amended Minutes.
(Motion made by Mike Lamoureux; seconded by Joe Pedro – passed unanimously)

2) Wallum Lake Canoe Launch/Dam: Joe Pedro reported the water level at 585.7, which is down 3 inches since Sunday, and will continue to lower the level until it reaches 585.5

Chairperson Rich Dionne stated that the Burrillville Conservation Commission takes its direction for maintenance of the water level from the Town Council, the Town Manager, and occasionally the Director of Public works, which is based on a memorandum of agreement between Zamborano Hospital, the Town of Burrillville, and Douglas State Forest. Rich then read a timeline of recent events pertaining to concerns surrounding the Wallum Lake Dam water level that lake residents have raised (see Appendix A).

Rich then opened the floor to comment from the public:

Speaking via Zoom was Cary vandenAkker: Mr. Vanden Acre noted that the memorandum is 20 years old and that the level of 586 is a bit high. A level of 585 would be more appropriate between the months of March – December.

Joe Pedro noted that a level of 586 is unusual for this time of year and is a result of the unusually high amount of recent rainfall. He expects the level to reach 585.5 by tomorrow, which is ideal for this time of year. He also noted that he never refused to open the dam, and had started lowering the level about a week prior to the expected rainfall. Rich noted that he has received a letter from Jeff McCormick, of the DPW, stating an outside engineer consultant will be hired to review the elevation marker on the dam, and to provide guidance on appropriate seasonal water level targets.

Speaking via Zoom was Jennifer Mier: Ms. Mier stated that a level any higher than 585.5 affects the water table, straining the septic systems and compromising shallow wells of lake residents. Ms. Mier raised the question as to where the target water level came from, and she will send documentation pertinent to the issue for inclusion and review by the hired engineer consultant. The request was also made to have regular maintenance (1-2 times per year) to unplug and flush out the dam. She also requested a summer level of 585 be maintained, as a dam level of 585.5 brings the level of the water 6 inches higher and up to the ground water table.

It was noted that Ron Gagne at DEM could not find a signed copy of the Agreement of Memorandum for the water levels.

Speaking via Zoom was Bryan Levesque: Mr. Levesque expressed concern that a plan for regular maintenance needs to be in place, and that the dam levels at 585.6 or .7 are still higher than normal. Further stating that a level of 585.5 is not good for everybody.

Rich stated that going forward, maintenance will be addressed.

Mike Lamoureux thanked everyone that joined the meeting and he is glad a plan is being formulated to address the residents' concerns. He stated any plan will need to consider the effects downstream from the dam, so it will be important to include Wilsons' dam operator in the plan discussions. Mike recommended the commission wait for the report from the hired consultant before committing to a winter level for the dam.

Jeremy Bailey expressed appreciation that coordination with downstream dam operators be part of the Wallum Lake Dam plan, in order to keep the water moving downstream.

Rich noted that when there is a larger dam event, we do coordinate with other dam operators in town. He will also speak with Jeff McCormick at the DPW about the cleaning out of the dam. With no one else wishing to speak on the topic, Chairperson Dionne thanked everyone for their input.

Rich noted appreciation of the Burrillville Police Department efforts of monitoring the Wallum Lake Canoe Launch this summer season in order to ensure the site is not being used as access for swimming, and to curtail any vandalism.

- 3) Nipmuc Trail:** Rich is trying to get in touch with member Cameron Genereux to coordinate a time to finish the maintenance projects that have been started, including staining the benches & table and the water bars. Mike, Ron, and Joe will coordinate a time to complete the projects.

A motion was made to spend \$300 to complete the purchase of the markers for the interpretive Trail.

(Motion was made by Joe Pedro; Seconded by Ron Lapierre – passed unanimously)

Ron noted he has been researching the Nipmuc Nation history in order to acquire information to post at the second kiosk.

- 4) Environmental Council of RI (ECRI):** The ECRI is made up of 60 organizations, both small and large, and it was an important supporter to the town during the Invenenergy Powe Plant battle.

A motion was made to spend \$60 for the annual membership dues to ECRI

(Motion made by Mike Lamoureux; Seconded by Joe Pedro – passed unanimously)

- 5) Gateway/Rt 102:** The solar lights do not seem to be working, possibly due to excessive rainy days, oxidized connections, or may need new batteries. Members will take note of the status of the light after a few consistent days of sunshine.

- 6) Invoices/Mail Received:**

- 7) Other:** Mike Wood made a recommendation to upgrade the Burrillville Conservation Commission website, to include posting information regarding the Wallum Lake Dam, events, and additional information regarding BCC managed sites. The commission was receptive and will add the topic to a future agenda for further discussion.

Rich offered to schedule a workshop for the commission regarding the RI Wildlife Action Plan, which is scheduled to be updated in 2025. The hope is to create one more level of protection of the area of the once proposed Invenenergy Power Plant site. The workshop would include information on map overlays of certain properties and the wildlife corridor. Amanda Freitas is the DEM contact.

8) Adjournment: 8:35 PM

(Motion made by Joe Pedro; Seconded by Mike Lamoureux – passed unanimously)

Richard Dionne, Chairperson

Appendix A

June 9 – Gail Labossiere, Town Manager’s Assistant, advised Mike Wood that Jennifer Mier, 206 South Shore Rd. stopped in to Town Hall to discuss a water issue on her property due to the marker on the dam being incorrect.

June 16 – A meeting was held with Mike Wood, Jeff McCormick and myself to discuss this issue. Jeff indicated that upon checking the water level with Zambarano Hospital water treatment operators, the water level measurement was the same level as indicated on the dam. I suggested that the only way to satisfy said resident was to have the levels at the dam surveyed by an outside contractor. All agree that this should be done and Jeff said he would make the necessary arrangements. As of July 12th an email from Jeff indicated that he just received the proposal and should get them contracted this week but will still take a few weeks for any answers. I’ve also contacted a sign maker and requested a quote on a new dam sign.

July 9 – I received an email from South Shore resident (The Sherman’s) indicating a problem with their boat dock being underwater and that the dam operator refuses to open it further. I reached out to Joe Pedro and he indicated that he opened it previously about one week prior in anticipation of excessive rainfall, adding that since he’d opened it up, an additional 4” of rain was measured on his rain gauge and that opening it much more would result in an overflowing road condition on Wallum Lake Road, with potential road hazard/safety conditions resulting. He also indicated that it takes approximately 24 hours to drop the level on Wallum Lake by 1”

July 15 – I received a forwarded email from Mike Wood from South Shore resident (Mark Dore) stating among other things that the Town of Burrillville is responsible for any property damage and legal action could result if no changes or corrective action was taken.

I immediately called Mike Wood and requested some direction in this matter. He said we should try and open the dam gate full open and see what happens. Once again I indicated that this could result in Wallum Lake Road overflowing and asked that Jeff McCormick, DPW Director, be in attendance for traffic safety concerns. It was agreed that on July 16 at 8:30 AM we would try this corrective action. In the meantime I got in contact with Mark Landry, Wilson Reservoir dam operator, to coordinate this action with him.

At 8:30 AM Joe Pedro, Jeff M. and myself opened the dam gate full open, which was about 6” more than it’s present setting. Considerably more water flow resulted and it was speculated that a restriction may have been lodged but not observed. The culvert started filling up along the road and approximately 15 minutes later Jeff M, while observing at the road, came back and told us to lower the gate back to the original position because water was flowing over Wallum Lake Road and he had safety concerns. Doing as directed the water subsided and stopped flowing over the road. A South Shore resident, Denny Sherman, stopped by while I was at the road observing and I fully explained the previous sequence of events.

I then proceeded to visit Douglas State Park and spoke with management and asked if they had any concerns or issues. They indicated that they had none other than a loss of beach which they said was

getting better by the day but was to be expected with the excessive amount of rainfall we've received over the past two weeks and that no one has control over weather conditions.

After arriving home on this day I received an email from Jeff indicating that water was still flowing over Wallum Lake Road and asked that we close the dam gate a couple more inches. I called Joe who said he had observed the same and had already closed the gate accordingly and would continue to monitor the situation.

July 18 – I drove up to Zamborano Dam and observed that the level was slightly above the 586.0 level (once again the required level as determined by RI DEM and stated in the "Memorandum of Agreement"). I observed that water was flowing rapidly under Wallum Lake Road and in the culvert but no danger of flowing over the road. I also drove down South Shore Road and observed that the water level was approximately 8-12" below the dock of the residents that said that their dock was "underwater" and their pontoon boat was in it's proper place alongside their dock once again.

Richard Dionne, Chairman, BCC