

Norwich Pool Options Committee

Final Report

December 20, 2016

The Norwich Pool Options Committee met almost biweekly since August 30, 2016. At the direction of the Selectboard, the Committees met to further investigate installing a “streamside pool” at the former Norwich Pool site accessed from Beaver Meadow Road. The Committee presents this final report and recommendations to the Town of Norwich (Town) Selectboard as a result of its findings.

The Committee review of work presented to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (VANR) indicates that the Town only considered dam options to restore the Norwich Pool after Tropical Storm Irene (Irene), which were rejected by the VANR. The Committee understands that in-stream dams to create water impoundments has not been reviewed favorably for approximately two decades, including a court case in the mid-2000s that established precedent for the VANR denial of the Town’s post-Irene dam proposal.

The Committee was informed that the Town and the Norwich Fire District would like to remove the dam for the former Charles Brown Brook Reservoir above the former Norwich Pool site. With the Committee’s understanding that the VANR encourages the removal of dams and the restoration of streams, wetlands, and natural resources, the Committee would like to pursue permitting and work for both projects simultaneously. The Committee received input that the VANR might be more favorably disposed to a stream-side pool in the context of holist plans and permitting.

Although the Committee was not provided with any past stream-side pool information, the Committee understands that it may be possible to permit such an amenity, while maintaining the stream channel as the most environmentally sensitive, least impacting alternative to recreating a pool to continue long term recreational benefit of the existing site. The Committee understands that previous work to design a dam includes most of the base information for planning, regulator interaction, and design based on regulator input.

The Committee recommends:

1. That the Selectboard appoint a Committee to assist with the proposed project from VANR interaction through engaging a project team for implementation.
2. That the Selectboard endorses an open and transparent process throughout project implementation. This recommendation includes consideration of public forums.
3. That the Committee approaches the VANR holistically with respect to stream, natural resource, and recreational facility restoration (particularly in the context of Recreation as a value in the 13 functions and values promulgated but the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the VANR). This recommendation should embrace at least a stream side pool and removal of the Charles Brown Brook Reservoir Dam (with restoration), and may consider other corridor elements such as the pedestrian bridge between the Legion property and Huntley Meadows.
4. That the Committee seek alternate sources of public funding since the Committee understands that the Town cannot realize the benefit of FEMA funding that should have been allocated to replacing the Norwich Pool subsequent to Irene. Such alternatives may include in-kind donations or volunteer organization work. Funding considerations discussed by the Committee:
 - a. Incorporating FEMA funds the Town receives to prepare the site for a real project.
 - b. Considerations of grant options available for this type of project, ranging from The Byrne Foundation to Trout Unlimited.

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- c. Incorporating volunteer efforts from organizations such as Team Rubicon, a national volunteer organization with the ability to provide significant construction expertise.
- d. Volunteer effort from Town and Upper Valley residents.
- e. Local donations from private individuals.

Respectfully Submitted
Norwich Pool Options Committee
Anne Goodrich, Chair

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