

TOWN OF GILL

MASSACHUSETTS



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SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

February 5, 2013

Call to Order: The Selectboard meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.

Present: Ann Banash (remote), Randy Crochier, and John Ward, Selectboard members; Ray Purington, Admin. Assistant; Paul Sievert, Amy Gordon, and Chris Polatin (Gill Conservation Commission); and Mike Bathory.

Randy stated that he received a request from Ann Banash to participate remotely in today's meeting for reasons of geographic distance (Florida). It was noted that meetings with a remote participant must use roll call for all votes.

The Selectboard and Conservation Commission met together to discuss topics to include in a joint letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) that will outline the Town's position on the license renewal for FirstLight's operation of the Northfield Mountain Pump Storage Project and the Turners Falls Dam.

There was a strong feeling of consensus that the Town needs to weigh in on the relicensing process, as this is a once-in-a-generation occurrence, and has a far-reaching impact on the future health of our section of the Connecticut River. While the license renewal is still almost 5 years away, now is the time to request certain studies be done, studies that will better inform FERC about reasonable conditions and requirements that could be placed on a renewed license.

Ann Banash noted that there is a high likelihood that the FRCOG will be providing some technical assistance to towns that want to be involved in the relicensing process.

The joint letter will focus on four main topics: erosion, water quality, quality of life for fish, and recreation areas. These are the primary themes that developed during recent public forums conducted by FERC. John Ward suggested the letter also make reference to identifying any possible scope creep from the original purpose of Northfield Mountain. Is it there to generate electric power for the region, or there to generate income for a global company? Mike Bathory suggested that possibly the letter could request a study that looks at changes to river management practices before and after electricity deregulation.

There was support for requesting a study of the "closed loop" option – a scenario that would have a man-made lower reservoir constructed in order to eliminate the use of the Connecticut River as the water supply and storage basin for Northfield Mountain. Any future license should also identify FirstLight's capacity and responsibility to repair damage and prevent future damage to the river. Also, all future riverbank erosion studies need to produce data that is comparable from one study to the next.

Amy Gordon, Mike Bathory, John Ward, and Ken Sprankle will work on a draft of the letter, to be emailed to the Selectboard and Conservation Commission by February 15th. The Selectboard will act on the letter at their meeting on February 25th. The deadline for the letter to be submitted to FERC is March 1st.

Adjournment: The Selectboard meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ray Purington, Administrative Assistant.

John R. Ward, Selectboard Clerk