

BILLERICA HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MINUTES
January 8, 2025

A meeting of the Billerica Historic District Commission was held on Wednesday January 8, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. at Town Hall, in room 210 and via Zoom. This meeting is recorded.

Present: David Gagliardi, Chairman; Travis Brown, Vice Chairman; Mary McBride, Secretary; Richard Hawes, Member; Michael Rea, Member; George Simolaris, Member; Mary Jones, Alt Member; Kathy Meagher, Alt Member; Dan Valentine, Alt Member; Katherine Malgieri, Acting Town Planner and Joyce MacMillan, Recording Clerk

Excused: John McKenna, Member

Absent: Tina Pesiridis, Alt Member

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Gagliardi called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Tom Lincoln of Medford, MA, and Chairman of the Middlesex Canal Commission – Mr. Lincoln spoke against the removal of the Talbot Dam. He spoke about restoring existing fish way/ladder. The dam was added to the National Register back in 1967. It was built 200 years ago, and Mr. Lincoln would like the Historic District Commission to deny the destruction of the dam.

Marlies Henderson, Sprague St. N. Billerica – Mrs. Henderson showed a PowerPoint presentation and said she was concerned with losing a historic landmark. If the dam is destroyed, we will lose Summit Pond. If this happens, she proposed a walking trail and bridge around the area to commemorate the pond and have a plaque that tells the dams story and shows what it and the pond looked like.

Andrew Jennings, 29 Talbot Ave N. Billerica – Mr. Jennings is advocating to save the dam. It is of historic importance to the town. He believes people are underestimating the devastation of the draining of the pond. They need more data; everyone should know the full impact.

Edward Reiner, 1 Pinewood Ave Billerica – Mr. Reiner is for the removal of the dam. He believes it has hurt the river ecology and believes it will all improve with the removal of the dam.

Jay Breen, President of the Middlesex Canal Assoc. – Mr. Breen is against the removal of the dam. There were three waterfalls along the river in 1700, and he would like to see the 1828 fishway rebuilt or replaced. He believes fishways work.

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APPLICATIONS:

31 Old Elm Street – Minor - App #2024-18

The applicant seeks to replace the vinyl siding on the house with traditional vinyl siding 8" tall by 12' long. The color will be wheat and a spec sheet with the product material information was included with original packet on November 6, 2024.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions and concerns. A sample of the siding was passed around along with the information sheet. The commission is not happy with the quality. It is too thin. Will the windows and the corners be the same? They are trying to save the existing window trim. They are scraping and painting them. Will the old aluminum be removed? Yes, it will all be removed. It will be about 4 to 4.5 inches around the windows.

George Simolaris, seconded by Michael Rea, made a motion to move Application #2024-18 to the next meeting.

It was voted:

7 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Mary McBride, seconded by Travis Brown, made a motion to open the Public Hearing.

It was voted:

7 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Talbot Dam Removal – Major – App #2025-01

Jill Griffith with Gomez and Sullivan and Eric Hutchins, Habitat Restoration Biologist for NOAA presented a PowerPoint presentation of the project overview. A copy was emailed to the commission prior to the meeting. They went over how this would impact the areas, the benefits of removing the dam, and the construction approach on how they plan to remove the dam.

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the committee for questions and concerns. If a MOA is signed by the Federal Government, will there be line items saying exactly what would be completed? Yes. Of all the dam removal projects Mr. Hutchins worked on; how many were on a river? The most recent one was on the Exeter River in NH. It was almost identical, similar to this one. The Exeter one was just one of more than fifty dam removal projects he has worked on over the last twenty-two years. They went over the pros and cons of a fish ladder, flooding, historic effects, why the town or anyone else will not purchase it and want to know if this is already a done deal. No permits have been issued but there are no other alternatives. If this committee and all the other committees vote it down, is it still going to be destroyed? The owner will appeal the decision. The owner has tried to sell it. If it is destroyed and there are negative impacts on the town, who would be responsible?

Chairman Gagliardi opened the floor to the public for questions and concerns. Many of the same people that spoke at the beginning of the meeting through Public Comment

spoke again and a few others. John Emery of Concord MA stating the dam was supposed to have been removed back in Civil War time. Joe Holbeche of Gloucester, MA stated that removal of the dam is the best option. Then there was Susie Bresney, who stated that there was history before the dam was built. The Native Americans history, it did not include this dam.

Chairman Gagliardi asked how much time the commission needed to digest all the information. They will revisit this at the next meeting, February 5, 2025.

Mary McBride, seconded by Travis Brown, made a motion to close the Public Hearing.

It was voted: 7 – In favor
0 – Opposed

OTHER BUSINESS:

Miscellaneous Correspondence: None

Minutes: Approval of D3cember 4, 2024, minutes

Mike Rea, seconded by Travis Brown, made a motion to accept the minutes of December 4, 2024.

It was voted: 6 – In favor
0 – Opposed
1 – Abstain-Hawes

ADJOURNMENT:

Travis Brown, seconded by Dan Valentine, made a motion to adjourn.

It was voted: 7 – In favor
0 – Opposed

Chairman Gagliardi adjourned the meeting at 9:32 pm.

Joyce MacMillan, Recording Clerk