

Process under way for taking dam

By Mary Standard , *Special to the Sun Journal*

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CANTON - Officials representing the Board of Selectmen, Water District and Anasagunticook Lake Dam Core Committee met Monday night to draw up plans for taking the defunct dam by eminent domain.

The chairman of the Dam Committee, Malcolm Ray, read a letter from Assistant District Attorney Phyllis Gardiner. She is representing the Maine Emergency Management Agency and the Maine Department of Transportation in a suit against dam owner Ray Fortier, who has been accruing fines at the rate of \$500 a day since Nov. 1 for violations.

The letter outlined the steps the town must follow to take the dam by eminent domain. First, selectmen must make the decision to take the property. Then they must file a paper of condemnation with the town clerk for the amount of damages, which at this time has been determined to be \$60,000. Fortier has already refused this offer from the town. The next step would be to hold a public information hearing and then have to wnspeople vote to authorize taking the dam.

The reasons for taking the dam were stated as flood control, economy of the town, water quality and property value. The water level has been 6 feet or more below normal since May 2007 when the dam gates were ordered by the state to remain open for safety reasons. Fortier was ordered to file a plan to make repairs and has repeatedly missed the deadlines.

"We have tried to work with Ray and this is the only way to go if we are to get anything accomplished," Committee Chairman Ray said. "It's already late to get in a temporary dam."

Board of Selectmen Chairman Scotty Gilbreth said he would speak to the town clerk on Thursday to establish an account to accept tax-deductible donations for securing the dam property. Checks may be made out to the town of Canton.

In a straw vote over which properties of Fortier's to take, two-thirds said to take the two properties at the dam site. Fortier also owns land where th e old water tower is located.

Ray thought it would cost less and the town would have a stronger legal case if the town took only the two properties. He said selectmen should make that decision.

Hartford will hold a town meeting on June 12 for residents to vote on how much money to appropriate for the dam. Dam Committee Chairman Ray said Canton should have its special town meeting immediately after June 12 to vote on taking the dam.

Ray also said officials should have a package ready to send to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection as soon as the property is acquired, so they can get a temporary dam in place to keep the water level stable.

Michael Ranhoff of Hartford said organizers have 700 bags loaded with sand and ready to put in place. The temporary dam would be located at the mouth of Whitney Brook.