

Canton Dam Panel Adds Two More

By Mary Standard, Special to the Sun Journal
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CANTON - The Core Committee studying the failing dam on Lake Anasagunticook gained two more members Tuesday night. Robert Turnbull will represent the Mill Pond Association and Judy Hamilton will be another Lake Association member from Hartford.

As soon as Malcolm Ray called the meeting to order, Herbert Harding said the Canton Mill Pond Association had formed with 25 members and wanted Robert Turnbull to represent them on the seven-member Core Committee.

Committee member Michael Poulin, who is serving as legal counselor to the committee, said they needed to work together and not have groups representing their interest.

Ray said it didn't bother him to have the Mill Pond represented because it had different concerns, but he didn't want the committee having too many groups represented.

Selectman David Bowen, representing Hartford on the Core Committee, said he liked having an odd number of members, and if Turnbull was added that would make eight.

Committee member Rick Ray, a Canton selectman, said he understood the concern the Mill Pond members had of being locked out of the lake.

"Whitney Brook has been a navigable stream in the past," he said. "I won't support building any dam that would lock anyone out."

Malcolm Ray said the group needed political consensus in Canton.

"There is something to be said to include people on the mill pond," he said.

Polly Bessier of the Lake Association said Judy Hamilton wanted to be secretary of the committee, which would make nine members and keep it an uneven number.

It was voted unanimously to have Turnbull on the committee.

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Malcolm Ray volunteered and was elected chairman of the committee with Bowen serving as vice chairman. Hamilton was voted as secretary.

Other members are Canton Selectman Lisa Cummings and Debbie Hutchins.

The committee worked on drafting a mission statement that includes its purpose of finding a permanent solution to the dam problem.

The 1814 dam at the Canton end of the lake is in need of major repair. Because of that, Fortier was ordered by a state official to leave the overflow sluice gates open, lowering the water level in the lake significantly and effecting properties around the shore.

The group discussed drafting a letter asking the state to take action when the engineers report is given to dam owner Ray Fortier. Fortier is supposed to have this report by Aug. 16.

Malcolm Ray asked the committee to come up with a list of questions that need to be answered, the first being who would operate the dam and how to get ownership. Poulin said the group must have a plan in place.

Malcolm Ray asked the lake association members to work on a possible petition asking residents to express their concern over the possible tax impact the low water level of the lake will have on the town's taxes.

Bowen said he is already getting requests for tax abatements from people on the lake.

Harding pointed out that Sabattus had a similar problem 30 years ago and may have some advice.

The committee will try to get some information from Sabattus for its next meeting at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 7, in Canton.