

RESILIENCE IMPROVEMENTS AT WATERSHOPS POND DAM

– FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS –

Has construction of the dam begun and when does the City anticipate it ending?

Yes! Gardner Construction & Industrial Services, Inc., of Chicopee, MA was hired by the City and construction began in August, 2021. The City anticipates construction being complete in the Spring of 2022.

Why did the City start the drawdown of the Pond in the Fall of 2020, if construction wasn't going to begin until the summer of 2021?

The time of drawdown was chosen strategically to minimize disruptions to wildlife in and around the pond, and was done in consultation with the Springfield Conservation Commission, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. Additionally, there were activities necessary to draft appropriate specifications for contractors that required a lower water level for safe access.

What is the plan for vegetation growing in the drained areas of the pond?

The plant growth within the drained basin of Watershops Pond has relied upon the nutrients already present within the pond-bottom sediments to fuel their growth. When the water level is returned to normal, the herbaceous plants will die and decay, and the nutrients will return to the sediments. The decaying vegetation may represent a temporary biological oxygen demand; however, refilling of the pond will occur in the springtime months, when dissolved oxygen levels in the water are relatively high.

To address any oxygen demands during the period of operational drawdown, the City has proactively installed an aerator device within the residual pool which is running 24 hours per day to infuse oxygen into the water.

Will the City be cleaning debris around the waterway before the pond is refilled?

The City has hired a licensed contractor to remove bulk debris from in and around the waterway. This will occur through the end of August and throughout the month of September as conditions permit. Residents and abutters that see large items of bulk debris (i.e. tires, auto parts, construction materials, etc.) around the waterway can email locations of that debris to tquagliato@springfieldcityhall.com and it will be added to the list for the contractor to remove.

Additionally, the City is working with neighborhood representatives to schedule a volunteer cleanup that will focus on removal of trash around designated perimeter areas of the lake. This cleanup is tentatively scheduled for September, and more information will be available publicly as plans are finalized.

Tree debris that may have been exposed by the drained waterway that residents can safely remove from the sandy perimeter of their rear yards can be disposed through the normal yard

waste disposal process. (NOTE: The City strongly discourages residents from going into muddy areas of the drained areas of the pond for any reason, and doing so can present a hazard to residents) All yard waste must meet standard DPW requirements for pickup. Yard waste disposal requirements can be found on the City's website here: https://www.springfield-ma.gov/dpw/index.php?id=yard_waste

Will the City be providing regular updates on the project?

Yes! The City has been regularly updating a project website. You can access that website at the following link: <https://www.springfield-ma.gov/planning/index.php?id=634>

Questions and concerns can also be emailed directly to: tquagliato@springfieldcityhall.com

Where can I get more information about the project and who can I contact with questions, comments or concerns?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the City suspended regular pre-project public meetings. However in lieu of a public meeting, the City did release an informational video and FAQs in English and Spanish. As the project has gotten underway, various City officials have attended some virtual neighborhood meetings at the request of neighborhood representatives. The City has also been maintaining a dedicated project website to keep the public informed about the status of the project. All public project information, including the previously mentioned video and FAQs is available at: <https://www.springfield-ma.gov/planning/index.php?id=634>

Abutters/residents may also email questions or concerns directly Tina Quagliato Sullivan at tquagliato@springfieldcityhall.com

Can the public tour the drained pond areas?

The City has intentionally tried to limit areas where the public would typically access the pond for public recreation. Residents may notice new temporary fencing along Alden Street near Springfield College. Much of the drained areas of the pond are very muddy, additionally there are underground springs and the higher than average rainfall this year that have all contributed to mud that has a "quicksand" like effect and those walking in these areas could easily sink deep into the mud. Therefore, in the interest of keeping residents safe the City is asking the public to avoid all muddy areas of the drained pond and to not enter the drained areas of the pond at this time.

When construction is complete and the pond is filled back up, how long will it take?

The amount of time may vary depending on rainfall and precipitation. Assuming seasonally-average rainfall, the City anticipates water levels reaching normal heights in approximately 3-4 weeks from when the refill begins.

PRE-PROJECT QUESTIONS

What is the Watershops Pond Dam Upgrade Project?

The City of Springfield acquired Watershops Pond and the dam in 1969 after the federal government closed the Springfield Armory, which had been in operation since 1777. The dam at the Watershops at 1 Allen Street has been in existence since the mid-1800s and had supplied various forms of waterpower to the Watershops, including hydroelectric power from 1920 to the 1950s. The current project will modernize the dam and improve its resilience to floods and other natural hazards.

Why is this project necessary?

While the dam was exceptionally well constructed, any structure of its age requires maintenance and upkeep to remain in service. Most importantly, the dam was built prior to modern-day standards and regulatory requirements for dam engineering and dam safety. The project will protect the long-term integrity of the dam and Watershops Pond and will ensure the dam meets or exceeds current regulatory standards regarding safety and stability, during “sunny days” and also during extreme flooding and seismic events. This project will make Springfield more resilient in the face of future severe weather incidents.

What are the benefits of the project?

Other than the Connecticut River, Watershops Pond is by far the largest body of water in the City of Springfield. By ensuring the long-term stability and safety of the dam, the project will protect the Watershops Pond recreational resource for generations to come. The project will ensure the safety of the areas and the people that live downstream of the dam by ensuring the dam continues providing necessary flood reduction benefits to downstream areas and that any risks to downstream areas are kept to a minimum.

Additionally, the Federal Lands to Parks (FLP) program of the National Park Service (NPS) conveyed two parcels of land including Watershops Pond (Lake Massasoit) to the City of Springfield to be used as public parkland. Since then, Watershops Pond and adjacent parkland has been used by the residents of Springfield and the surrounding area for fishing, boating, picnicking, and many other forms of passive and active recreation. This project would ensure continuation of these amenities.

How will abutters be impacted by the project?

As the design of the project proceeds, the City is conducting a thorough review of potential environmental consequences and will consider all feasible measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate damage to the environment. All practicable measures to minimize damage to the environment will be taken. The City has studied and will continue its evaluation of alternatives to the project, including removal of the dam.

One significant consideration currently under review is the potential for a full or partial drawdown of the pond’s water surface during portions of the project. A drawdown would

reduce risks to workers and downstream areas during the active construction work and would facilitate the control and diversion of the Mill River around or through the active work zone at the dam. Drawdowns of the pond have occurred in the past, most recently in 1973-74 for a sewer main construction project and in 1996-97. The drawdown has allowed the City to reduce extensive aquatic vegetation within the pond.

The drawdowns also allowed for the removal of debris from the extensive pond margin through cooperative cleanup programs with local civic groups and volunteer organizations. Drawdown of the water level would mean use of the pond by residents and abutters would be halted temporarily during the construction period. Additionally, debris removal may require brief utilization of construction equipment for removal of large bulk items. All construction will be conducted during normal business hours and abutters will be notified of any activities that may directly impact them.

How will the project benefit abutters once completed?

The long-term preservation and protection of Watershops Pond is important to the abutters to the pond, and the project will ensure the long-term benefits of the pond for generations to come. Important additional benefits could be realized if a pond drawdown were to be included as part of the project. A properly timed and conditioned drawdown would expose the dense beds of aquatic plants to killing temperatures during winter months. Bearing in mind that such activities would need to be separately permitted, a drawdown would facilitate the cleanup and maintenance of abutting properties that might normally be inaccessible.

What will be the hours of construction? Will noise from construction impact neighbors?

The period of active construction is not anticipated to require any significant extent of work outside of normal construction periods. The construction contract will require that all work be conducted in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations regarding worker safety and noise conditions. Other than the potential for a temporary cofferdam in close proximity to the dam, all dam work will be taking place at the dam and within the 1 Allen Street industrial complex.

If debris removal is permitted there may be brief periods of construction equipment utilized to remove bulk items from the pond. This will take place during normal business hours and any abutters who will experience impacts will be notified prior to the start of work.

What is the total cost of the project?

The total cost of the project is \$2.6M.

Who is paying for the project?

The project is being funded by a combination of funding from the City of Springfield general funds and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, CDBG National Disaster Resilience funding that the City won in a resilience competition.

How will the project impact the parks and public space around the pond and will the public still be able to access them during construction?

The parks and public spaces around the pond will continue to be available to the public throughout the project. If a partial or full drawdown of the pond is incorporated into the work, use of the pond may be temporarily interrupted. The City is exploring creative ways to mitigate for any temporary impacts. For instance, the City is working closely with the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife to explore opportunities for a temporary relocation of the annual spring and fall stocking of trout. In conjunction with any drawdown, Springfield will work closely with Fish and game to institute cold- and warm-water fish species at the conclusion of the work.

What will happen to the wildlife and fish that are in and around Watershops Pond?

Permanent impacts to fish and wildlife in and around the pond are not anticipated, except as may be associated with the potential temporary drawdown of the pond. A drawdown would temporarily affect several of the flora and fauna in and around the pond. Certain types of lake-bottom invertebrates (e.g., crayfish, mussels, various stages of insects, etc.) would likely experience temporary reductions in numbers that would rapidly rebound, and no species are expected to be lost from the system.

If a drawdown is conducted, it will be conditioned to minimize impacts to fish and wildlife by following the recommendations of the Springfield Conservation Commission and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. Most fish species would be expected to migrate upstream or downstream during the active period of drawdown, and even in the event of a full drawdown there would remain a partial pool in the deepest portions of the pond. Oxygen levels would be monitored in the remaining pool and aeration would be initiated if found necessary. While limited fish mortality would likely be experienced, enough adult fish would be expected to survive the drawdown to reproduce in the spring. No fish species would be lost, and restocking programs would give the fish populations a “jump start” following the project.

What are the different local, state and federal agencies that will have to review and approve the project?

The project will undergo intensive environmental review and approvals from a variety of regulatory agencies including:

Local

Springfield Conservation Commission

Springfield Historical Commission

State

Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety

Massachusetts Historical Commission

Federal

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers / federal Clean Water Act

Will the City be providing regular updates on the project?

Absolutely! The City is hosting a project-specific page on the City's website that will provide up-to-date information on the project from now until completion in 2022. Please visit www.springfieldcityhall.com at your convenience.

Where can I get more information about the project and who can I contact with questions, comments or concerns?

Until very recently, the City had been planning for multiple public meetings to discuss the Watershops Pond Dam project. The COVID-19 crisis has postponed the opportunity for close community contact while we practice safe social distancing. Until our daily lives get back to some degree of normalcy, please visit www.springfieldcityhall.com for regularly updated information regarding the project, including frequently asked questions and responses to public comments/questions. Abutters/residents may also email Tina Quagliato Sullivan at tquagliato@springfieldcityhall.com.