CITY OF NORWICH

OFFICE OF THE CORPORATION COUNCIL

MARCH 18, 1963

TO THE HONORABLE PRESIDENT AND

ALDERMAN OF THE CITY OF NORWICH

REPORT ON THE BREAK IN THE DAM

AT SPAULDING POND IN MOHEGAN PARK

I

Thefollowing is a factual report of, events leading up to the break in Spaulding Pond (dam) at Mohegan (Park) which occurred on the evening of March 6, 1963 and which resulted in the flooding of an area of the City of Norwich and caused the loss of life and considerable property damage.

The facts set forth herein are those available at this time. As our investigation continues it is probable that further facts will become available, particularly as to the cause of the break in the dam. We believe that this matter must be determined by expert engineering opinion and evaluation and not by the conjecture or guesswork of laymen.

Furthermore, in view of the continuing nature of our investigation no attempt will be made to draw any conclusions from the facts presently available and set forth herein.

Spaulding Pond is located in Mohegan Park in the northern part of the City of Norwich. It covers an area of approximately 13 acres and when at full level impounds an estimated 45,000,000 gallons of water. The water in the pond comes mostly from springs and such surface water as may flow from higher elevations. The pond is used mostly for boating and swimming during the summer season.

The dam which broke on the evening of March 6th is located at the southerly end of the pond near the recreational area of Mohegan Park. The dam is what is known as an earthen dam and is approximately 40 feet wide at the base and 12 feet wide at the top and is about 220 feet long. The northern side of the dam which faces the pond is covered with stone rip-rap, while the southerly side of the dam is earthen except for a stone wall which measures approximately 8 feet in height from the base of the dam. A small duck pond is located adjacent co and southerly of the dam. A road which runs in a general east and west direction from the recreational area to the part of the pond used for swimming is adjacent to and southerly of the duck pond and runs parallel to the dam.

It began raining late in the afternoon on Tuesday March 5th and heavy rains continued through the night and during the morning and afternoon of Wednesday March 6th. It stopped raining about 4 p.m. on Wednesday. In all about 1.7 inches of rain fell during such period and as a result there was a great deal of flooding in the low area of the city.

On Wednesday, the Director of Public Works attended a meeting of public works officials in Hamden, Connecticut. He returned to the city shortly before 6:00 p.m.

Shortly after his arrival he was informed that commencing at about 4:00 p.m. water was seeping out of the Spaulding Pond dam. He drove to Mohegan Park and observed the dam from the easterly end of the road which runs near the duck pond. He observed that the southerly side of the dam was covered with snow and that water was slowly seeping out at a point about two thirds of the way up from the base, which point was also about 4 or 5 feet above the top of the wall.

By reason of the fact that some seepage had occurred from time to time in previous years he was not alarmed by the seepage he observed at this time.

At that time the outlet (the valve at the bottom of the dam) was fully open and water from the pond was running onto the road (through the duck pond and onto the road south of it) and flooding it.

Employees who had been observing the seepage reported that there had been no change from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. Mr. Walz further observed that there was no scouring or erosion on the face of the dam.

From the park he went home to have dinner. Approximately at 8:15p.m. he left his home in his own car, accompanied by his son-in-law for the purpose of inspecting various sections of the city that were flooded as a result of the heavy rains.

At 7:30 p.m. he called the office of the Norwich Bulletin and advised them that water was seeping out of the Spaulding Pond dam.

At 8:30 p.m. Mr. Walz while driving down Williams St. met Orrin Carashick, Acting City Manager, who was turning from Oneco St. into Williams St. Both cars stopped in the street and upon inquiry from Mr. Carashick as to extent of flood conditions, Mr. Walz

described several of the areas in which flooding had occurred. He did not mention Mohegan Park or Spaulding Pond.

Mr. Walz then turned into Oneco St. to observe flood conditions on Zepher St. and Clinic Drive. He then proceeded via Harland Road and Ox Hill Road to Mohegan Park and Spaulding Pond.

He arrived at Spaulding Pond shortly after 9:00 p.m. and observed that water was gushing out of the dam just above the wall on the southerly side of the dam.

Since his personal car was not equipped with a radio transmitter he drove to the Book St. Barn of the Public Works Department and called the police department. The time was approximately 9:20 p.m. and the call was received by Capt. Casey of the Police Department.

The substance of the call was to the effect that water was gushing out of the Spaulding Pond dam and that there was the danger of a possible break in the dam, and that people living in the Curtis-Baltic Street areas should be alerted.

Capt. Casey immediately called several people on Curtis St. whom he personally knew and asked them to notify people in the neighborhood. He also alerted Cruiser No. 2 being operated by Officer Paradis to notify people of the danger over his loud speaker, and to warn them to remain in their house. When the loud speaker failed he ordered the cruiser to make passes on Mohegan Park Road with the siren wide open.

Immediately thereafter at about 9:25-9:30 Capt. Casey called radio station WICH and requested that an alert be broadcast. This could not be done immediately since only one engineer was operating the station.

At about 9:35 p.m. Mr. Edward Leonard, New Director of WICH called the police station from his home in Montville to get the details so he could broadcast the alert over the phone from his phone.

While Capt. Casey was talking to Mr. Leonard, Mr. Walz called the police station and reported that the dam at Spaulding Park (pond) had just broken. It was then about 9:37 p.m.

In the course of his travels to inspect flood conditions, Mr. Walz had noticed lights in the City Manager’s Office. After notifying Capt. Casey he called the City Managers Office to report the danger. The call was taken by Alderman Rutchik, who with Alderman McWilliams and Israelite were attending a meeting of the Purchasing Committee

of the Council. The time was about 9:25 p.m.

The break in the dam occurred a little to the right of the center of the dam and was approximately 28 feet in width at the base and 62 feet in width at the top.

As the water left the dam it travelled in a general southerly direction. When it reached the Mohegan Park Skating Pond it broke up the ice covering the pond and carried along cakes of ice. An examination of Spaulding Pond on Thursday March 7th revealed that the pond still was covered with a crust of ice indicating that the cakes of ice strewn on streets and yards came from the skating pond and not Spaulding Pond.

Spaulding Pond was constructed over one hundred years ago by the owners of the land comprising Mohegan Park. Mr. Walz informs us that since he became Director of Public Works no changes were made in the dam. Nor do the records of the department indicate that there have been any changes since the dam was originally constructed (since refuted). He further informs us that neither during his term or prior thereto is there any record of the dam causing any trouble.

Signed,

Orrin Cartashick

Corporation Counsel