

**Q. What is the Community Wastewater Project?**

A. The Community Wastewater project is an undertaking, over 10 years in the making, which seeks to solve the lack of wastewater capacity in the Town Center. Several parcels of property were studied as possible sites for in-ground and mound disposal systems. The site that has the largest capacity and is best suited to provide sufficient capacity is located on Brookside Road on the Town Forest property the Town acquired several years ago. This site can accommodate an in-ground (conventional leach field) system with a capacity of about 12,600 gpd without pretreatment. Pretreatment will likely increase this capacity.

**Q. What is the 1705 VT Route 128 Project?**

A. The property located at 1705 VT Route 128, also known as the Pigeon property, was a former service station and bus garage. The Town is investigating how, and to what degree, it can be involved in the redevelopment of this property by working with the landowner, public agencies and private developers.

**Q. Why does the Town need a community wastewater system?  
REVISED ON 08-28-2020**

A. From the mid-1800s through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Westford village was an active and thriving place, with stores, churches, blacksmith shops, a tannery, and professional offices. This was, of course, at a time when there were no rules or laws about wastewater disposal or potable water supply. Most structures used outhouses. Those structures that installed modern plumbing and boasted of 'indoor facilities' usually had its wastewater flow into a holding tank before making its way to the river. Today, wastewater disposal and potable water supply are governed and controlled by State statutes and rules of the Agency of Natural Resources. Any future development in the village will need to comply with the current wastewater regulations.

The Town Center area, not unlike other areas in Town, has clay soils, significant ledge, and a high water table, making the soils generally unsuitable for wastewater disposal systems. The septic tank and leach field serving the Town office and library is about 50 years old. The leach field sits under the parking lot for the Town office and is at the end of its useful life. If this system fails, there is no option or location for an alternate system. It was recently discussed that the septic tank for the 1705 VT Route 128 property may also use the same leach field as the Town office and library. The septic system for the Brick Meeting House is also compromised and nearing the end of its useful life. The White Church has only a holding tank, no leach field or disposal area. The tank needs to be pumped regularly. The White Church recently spent several thousand dollars repairing the line that runs from the church to the holding tank. At the very least, the Town must find solutions for its public buildings and civic meeting

spaces. The lack of wastewater capacity is limiting commercial development in the village. If the Town concentrates on only finding solutions to the wastewater woes of the Town's public structures, a dearth of capacity will still exist for other properties in and around the village. This will prevent any significant redevelopment of the village, including the development of any small-scale business. If the Town can develop a community wastewater system, it will eliminate the biggest barrier to the future revitalization and redevelopment of our Town Center.

**Q. What has the Town done to find suitable replacement options for the Town's public and civic buildings?**

- A. The Town has been looking at options for wastewater disposal for over 10 years. In 2008 the Town completed a feasibility study which investigated several parcels of property around the Town Common. The purpose of the study was to find a parcel that could serve as the site for a wastewater disposal system for the Town's public and civic buildings. There was one site identified located in back of the White Church. The soils in that location are not ideal and pose many limitations. Any disposal field built behind the White Church would be a mound system, would require significant blasting to get through ledge, would require expensive pre-treatment, may conflict with neighboring wells, and would be able to serve only the Town office, library, White Church and Brick Meeting House. In short, a disposal system in this location would be expensive to build and maintain. The cost would be shouldered solely by the taxpayers. No grant funding would be available. In spite of these obstacles, it was the only possible option the Town had for replacement of the aging wastewater system serving the Town office and library. The Town began studying how a system in that location could be constructed.

In 2018, the Town was presented with an opportunity that changed the landscape for wastewater disposal. After working for many months with the Vermont Land Trust and local property owners, the Town became the owner of the Jackson Farm and Forest property located on Brookside Road. (Maple Shade Forest) The northern most portion of that property contains soils very suitable for an in-ground leach field (not a mound system). A leach field at this location can provide capacity for many more uses and structures than just the Town office and library, thus giving the Town an opportunity to provide wastewater disposal capabilities to many other properties in the Town Center that cannot expand or be developed due to site specific soil limitations. As a result of the Maple Shade Forest acquisition, the Town has been concentrating on trying to find a way to construct an in-ground wastewater disposal system to serve the area around and adjacent to the Town Common and Brookside Road from the Common to the school.

**Q. Why is it better to develop a wastewater system using the land at Maple Shade Forest rather than the land behind the White Church?**

A. The land behind the White Church has very limited capacity and would only serve limited public and civic buildings. The Town would not be eligible for funding that is available for systems that serve other users. Westford is a designated Village Center and, as such, is eligible for 50% funding from several sources. In order to be eligible for such funding the wastewater system must serve residential uses as well as commercial and civic uses. Any remaining costs of construction can be spread out over 20-30 years. If the Town built a system serving only public buildings, the entire cost of construction and maintenance would be shouldered by taxpayers.

**Q. What is the estimated construction cost of a wastewater system using land behind the White Church?—ADDED ON 08-28-2020**

A. The last estimate the Town has for construction costs for a mound system behind the White Church is from 2016 at a cost of \$134,000. This is for a mound system that has a maximum capacity of 1220 gpd. In order to reach 1220 gpd, a pretreatment system is required. This will add at least 30%-40% to the cost. The estimate of \$134,000 also does not include the cost of additional engineering work needed to confirm the capacity of 1220 gpd. This estimate also does not include the cost of running pipe to the Brick Meeting House, which would likely add another \$150,000 to \$200,000 to the construction costs.

**Q. What is the estimated construction cost of a wastewater system using a leach field at the Maple Shade Forest property and how will that be paid?**

A. The current estimate for construction of a wastewater system that would circle the Town Common and run down Brookside Road, including the cost of constructing the leach field and replacement field, is between \$1.8-\$2.2 Million. Because the system will serve residential as well as commercial uses, the Town is eligible for 50% grant funding for the construction costs from the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund. The Town will likely also be eligible for additional funding from other State and Federal sources, but will not know how much until a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) is completed. The Town will seek additional funding sources for construction costs with the ultimate goal of finding enough money to cover all (or as close to all as possible) of the construction costs, thereby eliminating any need to ask taxpayers for additional funding. Once the system is constructed, private users of the system will be responsible to pay user fees for upkeep and maintenance. The Town will be looking for funding sources to reduce the user fees as much as possible.

**Q. If the cost to construct a disposal field behind the White Church is significantly less than the cost to construct a disposal field at the Maple Shade Forest property, why not use the White Church?—ADDED ON 08-28-2020**

A. There are many reasons the White Church property is not the best option for the Town.

1. The White Church site will have a maximum capacity of only 1220 gpd, and that is with using a pretreatment system. If we connect the Town Office, Town Library, White Church and Brick Meeting House, the needed capacity will be 2500 gpd, due in large part to the capacity needed for the Brick Meeting House. The capacity at the Maple Shade Forest property is 12,600 gpd, or ten times the capacity of the White Church site. This means that not only can the Town address its municipal wastewater needs, the additional capacity will help stimulate growth in the Town Center. There are currently no disposal sites available at or near the Town Office, Library or White Church. No revitalization or increased use of village properties can occur unless additional capacity is found.

2. The \$134,000 estimate for construction does not include necessary additional costs such as a pretreatment system, additional engineering to verify the estimated capacity, or the cost of running a collection pipe to the Brick Meeting House. It is anticipated that these items will add 200K-300K to the construction estimate. If the Town decides to use the White Church as a wastewater disposal site, it will need to seriously consider if connecting that system to the Brick Meeting House makes economic sense.

3. If the Town chooses the White Church site, 100% of the construction costs and 100% of the ongoing yearly Operation and Maintenance costs (O&M) will be paid by the Town's taxpayers. There are no grants available to the Town for construction of a wastewater system that serves only municipal buildings.

In contrast, using the Maple Shade Forest property makes the Town eligible for several state and federal funding opportunities, many of which are grants, meaning the money does not have to be repaid. For instance, the Town is eligible for, (and has received preliminary assurances that we will be awarded) a grant from the State's Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund for 50% of the construction costs, up to \$1.25 million, for a system that serves mixed uses, such as retail, office, commercial, residential and municipal. In order to create a system that can support these kinds of uses, the only option at this time is the Maple Shade Forest property.

4. The 50% grant from the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund is only the first option the Town has explored. There are many more funding opportunities the Town will explore after completion of the Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) later this year. It is the Town's goal to find as much grant funding for construction costs as possible, thereby reducing (or eliminating) the cost to the Town.

5. One issue that residents seem to focus on is the total construction cost of one option vs. the total construction costs of the other option. This is not an equal comparison. What we need to look at is what is the Town's share of those costs will be. The White Church site will require the Town to pay for 100% of construction costs and 100% of ongoing O&M costs. After adding in the additional costs needed to approve and construct the White Church site, the actual construction costs in today's dollars, would be at least \$300,000, if not more. For what we anticipate will be the same amount (or less), the Town can develop a wastewater system using the Maple Shade Forest property, which will provide capacity for many more users. In addition, the O&M costs will be shared all users of the system, not just the Town.

**Q. If the wastewater disposal system is approved for the Maple Shade property, will that construction occur all at once or in stages?---ADDED ON 08-28-2020**

A. One of the possible options that will be considered is constructing the wastewater system in phases. This decision has not yet been made and will depend on a number of factors including additional costs to construct in phases and whether favorable funding will be available for a phased construction schedule.

**Q. If the wastewater system is constructed, will all buildings that can be served by the collection pipe be required to connect to the system?—ADDED ON 08-28-2020**

A. No decision has yet been made about mandatory connection. This issue is still up for discussion. The Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) will provide a variety of options and additional information related to this issue for the Town to consider. Each user that is connected will have to pay its own hook-up fees and each user will pay a portion of the yearly O&M costs

**Q. Who will maintain the system once it is operational?---ADDED ON 08-28-2020**

A. O&M costs will include contracting with a third party to periodically inspect and service the system when necessary. O&M costs are shared by the users of the system.

**Q. How will maintenance costs of the community wastewater system be addressed? ADDED ON 09-15-2020**

A. Initial estimates of annual maintenance costs can be found in the 2019 Jackson Farm Property – Equivalent User & Financing Scenario Report, which can be found at the following link: <https://westfordvt.us/documents/reports-studies/> The figures in the 2019 Report include user fees to cover the cost of maintenance. These figures will be further refined in the Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) currently underway.

The other option available to address the needs at the Town's public and civic buildings – utilizing the small amount of soil behind the White Church -- requires a significant amount of piping, which will require ongoing maintenance, as well as a pretreatment system that will require annual inspection by a licensed engineer. However, since the capacity at this site is extremely limited, it does not provide an opportunity to share these maintenance costs with private users – meaning that maintenance costs would be borne mainly by Town taxpayers alone. On the other hand, the Jackson Farm provides the Town the ability to spread maintenance costs, as well as grow the Town's grand list.

**Q. What is the next step in the community wastewater project?**

- A. The Town owns the land on which an in-ground conventional wastewater system can be constructed, and has a preliminary design and estimate for construction costs. We are now working to find funding sources to pay for construction and reduce (or eliminate) any amount that the Town would be required to contribute. In order to apply to State and Federal funding sources, the Town needs to prepare a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER). We are in the process of preparing that report. It will not be finished until sometime in the Autumn or Winter 2020. The Town does not anticipate having any additional information to share on this project until early 2021. Links to the studies and plans that have been prepared thus far can be found by following this link:  
<https://westfordvt.us/documents/reports-studies/>

**Q. Why is the Town interested in the redevelopment of 1705 VT Route 128?**

- A. The results of public surveys and outreach conducted by the Westford Planning Commission, show a clear majority of citizens support and desire a vibrant village that offers commercial establishments and services to meet the community's needs. Citizens overwhelmingly support preserving Westford's rural character and oppose random chain-store development.

The 1705 VT Route 128 property is one of the most visual and important pieces of real estate in the village. Development of this parcel can offer the Town the opportunity to obtain many community benefits and will help set the tone for all future development around the Town Common. By becoming involved in the redevelopment of this property, the Town can realize many benefits for citizens including:

1. Permanent public access to the Browns River for recreational purposes: The Browns River is a lovely natural amenity that runs through the heart of Westford Village, but very few people have access to it or its recreational opportunities. The Town will work with development partners to secure river access.
2. An option for a new Town office: The Town office is rapidly running out of vault space for the safe (and legally required) storage of vital town records, including all property

transfer documents for each parcel of land in Town, (i.e. deeds, permits and mortgages). The 1705 VT Route 128 property provides an opportunity for the expansion or replacement of the current Town offices.

3. Improved parking and pedestrian safety: The Town can assure that any development on the property will incorporate an appropriate streetscape design that will include sidewalks, traffic calming measures, and adequate parking to best accommodate commercial and public activities.
4. Potable drinking water supply: Some properties within the Village have contaminated water supplies. The Town office and library do not currently have a reliable potable water source. The property has the potential to supply several village properties with potable water and is a potential water source for a public community water system, should the Town decide to develop one in the future.
5. Remediation of contaminated soils: The property was used for many decades as a gas/service station and a bus maintenance facility. An underground fuel storage tank was recently removed that had been installed years before any regulations were in place. The tank, through no fault of the property owner, had developed significant holes and leaked gasoline into the soils. Any redevelopment of the property will have to include remediation of the contamination. The Town and non-profit agencies are able to access funds for cleanup that are not available to private developers. Remediation will reduce potential future harm to the environment and the community, and will enable future development partners, including small local businesses, to access financing for future redevelopment.

**Q. Does the Town need to take ownership of the property in order to have a say in how the property is developed?**

- A. The Town is researching several different ways that it may be involved with the development of the 1705 VT Route 128 property. At this time, it appears that ownership of the property may be required to guarantee the establishment of community benefits including river access, potential for expansion or replacement of Town office, and improved parking and streetscape design.

**Q. How will the Town come to own the property?**

- A. The Town is currently in discussions with the Vermont River Conservancy (VRC). The VRC's business model is to buy private land that can provide public access to Vermont's rivers and ponds. It obtains funding to purchase these parcels through public and private sources that are not available to municipalities. Once the VRC has purchased a property for its fair market value, it establishes permanent public river access through conservation easements. Once permanent public access is established, VRC deeds the property to the municipality for one dollar (\$1.00). At this time, VRC and the landowner are discussing

VRC purchasing the 1705 VT Route 128 property. If that moves forward, then VRC will deed the property to the Town for one dollar (\$1.00).

**Q. Why is it necessary for the Town to become the owner of the property?**

A. Ownership will help the Town contribute to our tax base and expand the grand list. Ownership will allow the Town to partner with non-profit organizations to develop affordable housing, commercial space and access to the Brown's River. Owning the 1705 VT Route 128 property will help kick start the community wastewater project. The Town will control the subdivision of the property for the best economic advantage for the Town. It will allow the Town to establish agreements with public and private development partners prior to construction of the wastewater system, thus resulting in additional funding opportunities for construction costs and reduced user fees. Ownership will allow the Town to sell several of the subdivided lots to public or private development partners, thus realizing funds from those sales that can be used to help expand or relocate the current Town office.

**Q. Does the Pigeon property currently have septic capacity?---ADDED ON 08-28-2020**

A. The Pigeon property's waste disposal lines may be connected to the same leach field that services the Town Office and Library and is located under the parking lot for the Town Office. It is unknown whether the property has a location for expansion or construction of a leach field. Based on current soil mapping, it is unlikely that capacity of any significance is located on-site. The property can be used as it is currently being used...a single-family residence. This is because the system is grandfathered.

**Q. What are the intended uses of the Pigeon property?-ADDED ON 08-28-2020**

A. The current conceptual ideas are for mixed uses including residential, retail, office and municipal. No final plans have been made and further evaluation will need to occur after preparation of a site plan, which is what the planning grant will allow the Town to do.

**Q. Could the Town consider relocating the Post Office back to the Town Center/Common Area?-ADDED ON 09-15-2020**

A. The Post Office was located in the Town Center until the early 90s, when it was moved away from the Common onto 128. For many years, the Westford Town Plan has stated, *"The Town would be better served if the Post Office were relocated back to the Common."* The community wastewater project and 1705 redevelopment would be critical to relocating the Post Office to the Town Center. Unfortunately, existing public and civic buildings already require more wastewater capacity than is available in the Town Center, meaning that they are likely insufficient to provide the additional capacity needed for a new Post Office.



The Town has applied for a planning grant to further research the potential of the 1705 property, and relocation of the Post Office to the 1705 property and/or a new mixed use Town Office could be considered as part of the planning process. The leach field for the Town Office and Library is located underneath the Town Office parking lot, making it extremely difficult to expand the footprint of the Town Office without relocated the septic system. Additionally, the drinking water for the Town Office is challenged, and the Post Office may be reluctant to locate in a building without potable water. The 1705 property may provide options for overflow parking and potable water, which could significantly improve the feasibility of relocating the Post Office to the Town Center.

**Q. Are the community wastewater project and 1705 VT Route 128 project connected?  
REVISED ON 08-28-2020**

A. The two projects are connected in that they will both benefit from each other. In other words, if the Town is able to move forward with both projects, the community wastewater system will have immediate paying users once it is constructed, and the 1705 VT Route 128 property will have its required wastewater capacity. No development of the 1705 VT Route 128 property can occur without a wastewater disposal solution. Its likely that any development of the 1705 VT Route 128 property will be dependent on the Town constructing a wastewater disposal system. The wastewater system is dependent on the 1705 VT Route 128 property because it will immediately have paying customers and will then be a more financially viable option for other development in the Town Center.

**Q. How can the 1705 VT Route 128 property be subdivided?**

A. In order to move forward, the Town needs to develop a site plan for the property. Once the site plan is created, the Town will have a better idea of what potential development on the property will look like. The zoning regulations allow for multiple separate building lots to be created on the property. The current vision is to have mixed residential and commercial development all along the front of the property adjacent to Route 128. The back portion of the property, which drops off significantly and runs toward the river, sits in the floodplain. This portion of the property would likely remain open space consisting of public access to the river and possibly a community water supply source. At the present time, the Town is anticipating full buildout of the 3 potential lots with commercial, office and residential space.

**Q. What is a “development partner” and who are they?**

A. A development partner is a public or private entity that the Town will join with to develop part or all of the property. The Town has begun discussions with VRC as a potential “bridge-owner”. The Town has also had preliminary discussions with several non-profit housing developers including Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity,

Champlain Housing Trust and Vermont Housing Conservation Board. The Town has also been approached by local private developers who are potentially interested in working with the Town on the development of the property.

**Q. How can we be certain the redevelopment of 1705 VT Route 128 will not detract from the Town Common?**

A. Westford adopted a form based zoning code for the Town Center area in 2016. The form based zoning code includes detailed design standards to help ensure that any new development honors the character of the Town Common. By being involved with the development of the property, the Town will further ensure that the redevelopment of the property meets other community objectives and enhances rather than detracts from the character of the Common.

**Q. What is the next step for the 1705 VT Route 128 property?**

A. The Town has asked the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) for assistance analyzing and researching the property, specifically seeking to identify what steps need to be taken to prepare the property for redevelopment and what the cost of that work would be. The purpose of this analysis is to determine if it is advantageous for the Town to work with the landowners to plan for future development of the property. In order to explore this possibility further, the Town needs to develop a preliminary site plan that will identify and address many site specific issues including, river access, parking and streetscape, potential for town office expansion, contaminated soil cleanup, and potable water supply potential. In order to develop the site plan, the Town needs additional funding. The Town is seeking this funding through grants. The Town is eligible for a planning grant from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program which is administered through the Vermont Community Development Program. The grant amount Westford is seeking is \$60,000.00. The Town is required to contribute 10% of that amount in matching funds, which can be in-kind work and research, much of which has already occurred. Based on current projections, it appears the Town will not have any out-of-pocket costs associated with this grant. The Town applied for this planning grant on September 8, 2020. We will not know if we are awarded the grant until December, 2020.—UPDATED 09-15-2020

**Q. If the Town decides to move forward, where will the money come from to subdivide and develop the property?**

A. The purpose of working with development partners to give the Town the opportunity to have a say in how the property is developed. Until a site plan is created, we do not know exactly how the property could be subdivided and developed or which potential development partners will share in those costs. Currently, it is anticipated that the costs of future development will rest primarily with the Town's development partners.

**Q. How will the Town pay for a new Town office?**

A. If the Town is successful in acquiring ownership of the property for one dollar (\$1.00) from the VRC, the Town can then subdivide and sell the lots to a development partner(s) who will construct improvements in accordance with the site plan. Money realized from the sale of the lots can be used to help pay for expansion or relocation of the Town office.

**Q. What happens after the Town completes its additional investigation?**

A. If the investigation and development of a preliminary site plan supports the Town moving forward, the next step would be to begin implementing the steps identified in the preliminary site plan and partnering with the VRC and other public and/or private developers to begin planning how the property will be redeveloped. Any further involvement with this property will involve community discussion and vote.

**Q. What if I have questions about the community wastewater project or other development projects in Town? – REVISED ON 08-28-2020**

A. The community wastewater project is in a holding pattern right now while we wait for the Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) to be completed. Once that is finished, the Town will share the PER with the public and begin researching and applying for grants and sources to fund the final design, permitting and construction costs. If you have questions, you are encouraged to attend a Planning Commission meeting or communicate with the Town Planner, Melissa Manka at [planner@westfordvt.us](mailto:planner@westfordvt.us)

**Q. Will there be a Town vote on whether the Town will construct a wastewater system using the Maple Shade Forest property for a disposal field, and will there be a Town vote on whether the Town will become involved with the redevelopment of the Pigeon property?---ADDED ON 08-28-2020**

A. Yes. Any proposal to construct a wastewater system will require a Town vote. Likewise, any Town involvement with redevelopment of the Pigeon property will also require a vote. This will happen even if the Town is able to find 100% of the funding necessary. Many funding sources, even if 100% of the costs are being paid, require a vote of the municipality to support the project. In addition, these projects are important to each and every resident. The Town wants voters to be engaged in this process and understand what the proposals mean both now and for the long term. As additional information is developed and becomes available, it will be shared through the Town Newsletter, FPF posts, and public meetings.