

SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING
December 10, 2020
Minutes

Present:	Julia Andrews	Callie Hamdy
	Bill Cleary	John Roberts
	Allison Hope	Greg Barrows
	Nanette Rogers	

Guests: See attached

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held via Zoom. All attendees attended remotely.

CHANGES TO AGENDA

VDCP Grant award letter, Grant Agreement Resolution and Resolution to Designate a Public Agency were added to Discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

CONCEPTUAL COMMUNITY WASTEWATER SYSTEM

The Planning Commission and Stone Environmental were present to talk about the ongoing Community Wastewater System project.

Draft Preliminary Engineering Report

Stone Environmental put together the Draft Preliminary Engineering Report. Brad Washburn, Amy Macrellis, and Juli Beth Hinds were present from Stone Environmental to discuss. Brad explained that the report contains all the information to utilize a Community Wastewater in the Maple Shade Town Forest.

They have come up with four alternatives and most of the changes are how to get the waste to the disposal field which is part of all designs. The four alternatives are:

1. Individual sewer hookups for every house that would pump up to a common pump station that would apply the waste to the disposal fields accordingly.
2. Same concept with pump station as #1 but pumps up to a pre-treatment unit that pre-treats waste prior to disposal. Pretreatment allows one to treat the waste prior to applying it to the fields which in theory allows the fields to take more waste, even double capacity.
3. Low pressure sewer but common pump station on the Common. This would collect all sewer and then pump up in one line up to the pump station that would then apply to disposal fields. No pretreatment. It is a long way to pump individual houses up to disposal site so exploring the hydraulics of everything is important.
4. Same low-pressure sewer with common pump station as #3, but it pumps up and goes to pre-treatment before applying to disposal fields. Getting the additional capacity out of the fields if capacity of pre-treatment can be done.

Brad stated that the alternatives don't currently have many environmental issues. Usually with picking an alternative you choose between different environmental issues that may hold up a project, but that is not the case here which is a good thing. Stone Environmental is proposing choice 3 or 4 with the common pump station. Testing needs to be done in the disposal field in order to provide the data to support pretreatment. Putting the pump station on the Common would be a big deal, but Brad recommends more research is needed regarding where it will go. Where items like this are located is often a big issue and he doesn't want to be obtrusive or offensive to those in the village. He thinks the steps would be to explore where everything would go and then make things work.

Juli Beth explained that pre-treatment is great because if you are connecting any food related uses that it makes sure your disposal field is not overloaded which allows the Town to say yes to more projects that involved food processing. An example is Lawson in Waitsfield. It is a \$1.9-\$2.4 million cost which is like elsewhere in Vermont for the same size. This would be paid with grants as opposed to loans. The State of Vermont has a lot of funding available for state revolving funds for wastewater projects and the grants have low interest. Recently the State has allowed a 30-year term because these community systems are doing well when properly maintained and have a 30-year lifespan or longer. The system in Warren is coming up on 30 years and is still doing great.

Bill asked if the pretreatment option is not selected, can it be added years down the road? Brad explained yes, but it would be more involved because you would have to figure out how the leach field has been maintained for the previous years and the disposal field would require a significant evaluation prior to being able to get a permit. One would have to determine if the disposal field could handle larger flow of waste from pretreatment versus what it was previously being used for. Amy explained the team could design a pretreatment that could go in after, but the installment of pretreatment right off the bat means that the leach field is better protected. The current leach field site in the Maple Shade Town Forest is the only one of its kind near the town center so potentially ruining those fields would also bring greater issues into the town center.

Seth Jensen from the Planning Commission asked the Stone Environmental team to explain the alternating leach field design and to explain in scenarios 3 and 4 if it is just septic tank effluent flowing to the properties or do you also have solids coming from the properties? Brad explained the leach fields would be set up to have two fields on and then two fields off every year. There would be no solids making their way up to the leach fields. Individual property owners would be responsible for pumping their septic tanks for solids, or the Town could contract the pumping which is what Stone Environmental recommends.

George asked how frequently the individual tanks would need to be pumped. Brad explained it depends on the usage, but most septic tanks should be pumped every 3-5 years. Typically, what would happen is, every year individual tanks would be evaluated. A third party would go look at the tanks and write a report to the Town regarding their need for pumping or not. That would be built into the Town's ordinance because you do really need to keep your finger on that because if solids make their way to the leach fields things can go wrong quickly.

What are the extra expenses the Town would incur? Juli Beth explained that each of the options has an annual ongoing operation and maintenance budget assigned to it that explains the extra cost to the Town. The diagrams were in the document provided by Stone Environmental on page 22. Stone Environmental is comfortable with those numbers based on

other projects such as the wastewater system in Warren. Juli Beth is not a fan of having individual property owners have surprise costs such as pumping their own septic system.

Ira Allen asked how many users the costs anticipate. It was around 45 users. Stone Environmental hopes that the Town of Westford is able to get significant grant funding as this is an important project. They also hope that they can get the equivalent user annual fee anywhere from \$650 - \$1,000. If the Town gets the NBRC grant that would reduce annual costs. Ira asked if one unit with multiple residences, such as apartment buildings, was considered one unit. Amy explained that it was considered the same as a single-family dwelling which is one of the advantages of having a design with a large flow. Some residences generate very little wastewater and some larger. The more users there are on the system, the more the system can be balanced out. But items like restaurants that have a lot of potential users in one day would be more. The Pigeon Property project will be a potential opportunity to experiment with those design flow scenarios.

Julia thanked Stone Environmental for their thorough work on the document. Brad explained that the aggressive schedule outlined in the document is important and he would like to get an official schedule laid out or else the grant funds may not be available. Getting to a bond vote is crucial. The PER needs to get in front of the state as soon as possible, Brad hopes to submit it by the end of the year. Submitting the PER doesn't commit the Town to anything, but it would be difficult to get funding without it. Julia explained from her personal perspective she doesn't feel fully ready to charge ahead at this moment because it's a lot of information to go through and she would like to make sure she fully understands. She does understand the urgency however. Julia invited Stone Environmental and the Planning Commission and other board members to the next Selectboard meeting so they could have a discussion once the board members have had time to digest the information.

Seth explained that one of the reasons the Planning Commission has put this on the agenda for this year is that under this fiscal year there is loan forgiveness and grants for this phase. One of the Planning Commission's commitments is to minimize the impact on the Town and taxpayers as much as possible. Julia asked if the Town were able to move this forward if this grant funding is sealed? Seth explained it would be set up in the IUP, but it is specifically targeted towards designated village centers like Westford. But we are probably ahead in that race as well. It would be of course great to keep moving forward.

Line of Credit

Julia asked Greg if he had an opportunity to explore our options. Greg explained that he hopes to get to this next week, the budget has been his priority lately.

Bond Vote

George wanted to talk about the bond vote. He thinks it is critically important of the Planning Commission, Selectboard and people of Westford that we have all the information prior to looking at a bond vote. He appreciates the schedule set out by Stone, but he is not confident that we should force a March bond vote at this point, we have a lot to still learn. To suggest that we could do a bond vote in March is optimistic, but he does not feel this is realistic.

There are pros and cons to extending the timeline for bond vote. There is a lot of outreach to do. Amy advised of contingent language that could be put in the bond vote article so that when the Town is ready it is able to minimize the risk the taxpayers are taking if they say yes. Juli Beth asked for the Westford experience for votes done out of the usual schedule. Nanette

explained it depends on what the item is. If its something the community is passionate about one way or the other turnout is usually good. This is Australian ballot article so that's also good regarding turnout. She would expect turnout similar to Town Meeting or higher. There is also a school vote in April so something could be added on to that voting day.

Seth explained if we come up to March and April and if for timing reasons, etc. pursuing the vote doesn't seem like a good idea, he would suggest the Selectboard articulate the importance of extending that opportunity for the grant share for construction because typically Vermont has not made the grant share available for rural community projects and that was a pretty big win for rural communities to have it in their IUP.

VDCP GRANT AWARD LETTER

The Selectboard needed to review the grant award letter and sign off on it if they approved. George saw nothing wrong with the document, but they didn't anticipate the type of conditions lined out in the document.

GRANT AGREEMENT RESOLUTIONS

Allison made a motion to approve the Grant Agreement Resolution, seconded by Bill. Motion passed: 3-0.

Bill made a motion to approve the Resolution to Designate a Public Agency, seconded by Allison. Motion passed: 3-0.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julia Andrews, Chair
Selectboard

Callie Hamdy
Assistant Town Clerk

GUEST LIST

Kim Guidry
Ira Allen
Brad Wishburn
Amy Macrellis
Buddy LCATV
George Lamphere
Juli Beth Hinds
Gordon Gebauer
Seth Jensen