

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR APRIL 5, 2021 MEETING**

Approved on May 3, 2021

Commission/Board Members Present: Koi Boynton, Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen George Lamphere and Mark Letorney.

Also, Present Melissa Manka - Town Planner; Greg Barrows - Town Treasurer, Julie Beth Hinds - Birchline Planning; Ben Bornstein, Kim Guidry, Ira Allen, and Vicky Ross.

The meeting began: 6:30pm

Amendments to Agenda: none.

Line of Credit: Greg Barrows, Town Treasure and Julie Beth Hinds, Consultant from Birchline Planning were present to discuss the need for a line of credit. Julie Beth communicated that, as she has seen with other wastewater projects, the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund does not provide cash flow to get money out because it is a reimburse only program. Cancelled checks must be submitted to activate monthly reimbursements. Currently, we are seeing a 30-to-45-day turnaround after reimbursements are submitted. During wastewater constructions, towns can be paying out \$50,000 to \$75,000 in a single month and that can be challenging without a line of credit. For Waitsfield's construction, which was comparable to the Westford proposed system, their line of credit was \$300,000. The line of credit could be solely for the wastewater project or a general line of credit that could serve the town in the long-term. We should compare a general line of credit to a specific line of credit. Greg should talk to a number of banks, present the town's assets and the wastewater project and see what they would offer as a line of credit and interest rate. Rosemary White at Northfield Savings Bank worked with Waitsfield and she would be a great resource. Seth will connect Greg to Mark Schilling in Cambridge, who has experience with holding and using a line of credit for a municipality. We should reach out to a number of banks to get the cost as low as possible. Timing for securing the line of credit was discussed. Should the line of credit be secured before or after the bond vote? It was decided that after the bond vote will be too tight and the line of credit should be secured before that.

Citizens to be Heard, Announcements, Correspondence & Other Business: CCRPC's Board approved the Town Plan and Energy Plan.

Melissa let the PC know that we will be going over budget for legal notices because of the number of public hearings we need to warn. Having the Town Plan and the WLUD amendments in the same fiscal year will put us over budget. We do have enough money over all but that line item will be over budget by approximately \$1,000. No action is needed.

Minutes of the March 2, 2021 Meeting:

VOTE: *Gordon made a motion to approve the minutes as amended of the March 2, 2021 PC Meeting. George Seconded. The motion carried.*

Reorganization & Rules of Procedure: It is that time of the year when we elect the PC Chair, Vice-Chair, clerk, as well as approve the rules of procedure and sign conflict of interest. Melissa reviewed a number of changes to the rules of procedure.

***VOTE:** George made a motion to pass the rules of procedure as amended. Mark seconded. The motion carried.*

Chair, Vice-Chair and Clerk positions were discussed. Those currently holding those seats confirmed that they are fine with continuing.

***VOTE:** Gordon made a motion to nominate George as the PC Chair. Koi seconded. The motion carried.*

***VOTE:** Gordon make a motion to nominate Koi as the PC Vice-Chair. Mark seconded. The motion carried.*

***VOTE:** George made a motion to nominate Seth as the PC Clerk. Gordon seconded. The motion carried.*

There was a short discussion regarding how the PC is doing and what should be considered for the coming year. A 9pm hard stop time for meetings was discussed. It was agreed that unless there is a pressing deadline, we should stop meetings at 9pm. There was short discussion on daytime meetings. That seemed to work for commissioners and the question was raised regarding accessibility for residents that might work days.

It was agreed that the PC can only focus on the wastewater and town center revitalization/1705 property for the next 1.5 years.

In order to move forward with the PC's plan of increasing communication with the Selectboard, George will be attending the first SB meeting of each month and will have 10 minutes on the agenda. Other PC members are welcome to join. This will begin April 8, 2021, when George updates the SB on the congressional ask that was submitted to Rep. Welch's office and update on wastewater progress of heading into Step 2. Melissa will include the SB crossover meetings in the PC workplan.

1705 Rte. 128 Property Project Town Center Community Wastewater Projects:

1705 Property: The RFQ for the contractor for the VCDP Planning Grant deadline was last Friday. Three firms have submitted. PC will review submissions at the April 19th meeting after the public hearing. The draft contract has been reviewed by the state and the agreement needs to be written up. Melissa will be meeting with LE Environmental and state next Monday to discuss the Phase 2 supplemental report. The project partners (Green Mountain Habitat, River Conservancy, Champlain Housing Trust, Town and CCRPC) for 1705 will meet in April. The contractor will also be hired in May. Interviews will happen at the PC's May 3rd meeting. The Phase 2 has been shared with the River Conservancy. The questions about range of contamination and mitigation will be important to them. Melissa is hoping to get examples of possible mitigation from LE for the River Conservancy. The hope from Monday's meeting is that the state will provide

information on appropriate mitigation to inform the site plan. Picking a consultant that is familiar with Brownfields is critical. No action needed at this time. The PC will review consultant submission and hire consultant in May.

Preliminary Engineering Report, Environmental Information Report & Step 2 Engineering Services Agreement: The PER was accepted by the state without comment. The Environmental has a few more pieces that need to be put in place. Once that is together it will be submitted to the state and we can move to Step 2. The Step 2 Engineering Services Agreement will be reviewed during the PC's April 19th meeting.

Northern Border Regional Commission Infrastructure Grant: An LOI was submitted to Northern Borders for the Wastewater System. The funding landscape has changed with all the federal money coming down and the return of earmarks. Perhaps we should consider submitting our application for this coming round and not next year. The question is how much support will Liz need in preparing the application. Koi will reach out Liz to determine what she needs support on and how much time that will take from commissioners. This will inform if we are able to submit an application this year.

Congressional Funding Request for Town Center Community Wastewater & 1705 VT Route 128 Property Projects: We did submit a request to Welch's office for the wastewater. 1705 was taken out of the request because of the short turn around to get the letter in. George will work with the SB to get a revised letter together that they can sign and resubmit. We will be notified April 15th if we made the top 10 list. Thank you to George for getting the letter in! George welcomes feedback on the revised letter

Town Center Community Wastewater & 1705 Rte 128 Property Public Outreach, Education & Webpage: A broader plan for outreach needs to be discussed. The webpage is up the PER is approved and we need next steps for public engagement. The feeling of the PC is that end users need to be engaged in the conversation. Melissa and Seth met with the consultants and developed a public outreach plan. The SB PER meeting happened and now the next step would be to reach out to the users with the most capacity demand, the two apartment buildings and the store. Meet with them and present before meeting with the full-service area and town. After those meetings are held a letter would be sent to the service area or full town, inviting them to an information meeting. It is pointed out that the letter should demonstrate benefits of the new system. Mark communicated that meetings with end users should happen before a public meeting. Melissa pointed out that any service area meeting would need to be a public meeting. Gordon pointed out that Mark is suggesting one on one meetings with end users. Mark agreed. Melissa pointed out that would mean the PC meeting with 35 households and needing to compile the information gathered. In the Step 2 Engineering Service Agreement there will be an end user survey to get a better understanding of who would hook into the system. Mark believes we need to be able to present annual costs to end users and get feedback if it will work for them. It is proposed that "kitchen table" discussions do need to happen but they should be with the larger volume users and the engineers should be involved. We need people thinking about the benefits and that they will no longer be limited on bedroom size or costly replacement of failing systems. If the PC is talking to end users in an informal way, there needs to be a consistent and clear message. If the PC is going to engage end users, we need more answers, which the Step 2 will

provide. The plan that Melissa and Seth discussed with the consultants was that meetings with the larger users would be had soon and the informational meeting would happen this spring. There was a great deal of discussion on how to share and gather information from an informational sheet to survey monkey. A town common walk through to visualize the system was also discussed. It was decided that George and Mark will connect with Julie Beth and talk through the concerns of needing a way to gather feedback from end users.

Westford Land Use & Development Regulation (WLUD) Public Hearing Prep: The public hearing will be held on April 19th. The redlined version of the WLUD is on the website. George will present the high-level perspective of the amendments. Everyone that took the lead on different sections will be able to speak to those sections. No need for a formal presentation. The PC will talk through the changes – what it was and what it is now. The attendants will be encouraged to have a copy up on their own screen so that they can follow along. George and Melissa will develop a logistics plan for how to receive feedback (video, chat, and phone) during the hearing.

Green Mountain Gazette Town Center Revitalization Articles & May Newsletter/FPF Article: Mark spoke with the Green Mtn Gazette. The article has not been published yet. The May newsletter is coming up. It could be on wastewater – summary of project, cost discussion, and estimated timeline. Gordon will work on the May Newsletter. Review at next meeting. Deadline is April 26th.

2020 Work Plan: Melissa will add the 1st select board meeting of the month to the workplan. Melissa is working on a number of things and will not be able to attend the CDBG required fair housing training. Koi will attend on behalf of the town.

Adjourn: 9:01pm