

of the Westford Country Store & Café soon to be open for business on Common Road, has offered to pave Common Road when the store's parking lot is paved. John has done further research and now believes that maintenance will not be an issue as he once thought. John felt that paving the road when Jeff paves the parking lot will save a lot of money.

Allison was surprised to see this topic on the agenda again because she thought the Town had decided that the long-term maintenance costs outweighed the short-term savings. Seth Jensen sent an email to the Selectboard warning of the drainage issues on the common and that if Common Road were paved it could further exaggerate the problems. Allison is grateful to Jeff for the offer, but there are other things the Town needs to take into consideration. Kim Guidry was present and agreed it was generous, but her concerns were driving speeds. With the store nearby it becomes an even greater pedestrian area and if it were paved it might encourage people to drive faster. Julia thanked Jeff again for the offer, but at this time the Board is going to graciously decline because there are so many other considerations to explore before something like this moves forward.

GOODRICH TRAIL

A letter from legal representation from one of the landowners off the Goodrich Trail was received and was a good reminder to Julia that there is yet another consideration for another landowner that has permission to utilize the Trail.

The Goodrich Trail has seen an increase in motorized vehicle traffic. The increased use by motorized vehicles is causing damage to the Trail. The Board is looking to mitigate unnecessary traffic. They considered placing large rocks across the Trail, but it seems this will not work for the property owners that need to access their property via the Trail. Julia thinks they can forgo placing rocks across due to the situation and can continue putting signage up about the fines associated with using motorized vehicles on Town Trails.

The Town authorized Doug Edwards to make improvements to a portion of the Trail, however those improvements exceeded what was authorized. The Town wants to work with Mr. Edwards to put the Trail back to its original condition before the improvements were done.

Ben Bornstein, one of the property owners, was present. He wanted to be clear that causing the trail to become obstructed or impassable would be in disagreement to the two stipulated court orders for the A. Johnson Co. and the Bornstein family. The stipulations run with the land. Ben explained that his family has had the land for a long time, and he believes have been good stewards of the forest. They need their access. Julia stated that the Board and Mr. Bornstein are on the same page; the Town does not want to make access difficult for those that are allowed access.

John has put signs up on each end of the Goodrich Trail. He has informed Doug Edwards that the Road Crew is not able to do the work to the Trail due to the number of projects they are trying to complete. Julia would like Nanette to call Doug and remind him that the Road Crew is not available to do the work therefore he is responsible for making sure it is done. Nanette also advised that putting large rocks across the Trail is not a solution. The signage does not apply to those who have an agreement with the Town to use motorized vehicles on the Trail. Those using unauthorized motorized vehicles on the Trail will be fined.

EQUIPMENT EXPENSES

The Road Crew has had issues reaching each other via the radios on certain roads. The individual that does the two-way radios visited the shop recently and a new antenna is needed to reach the whole town. The cost of the new antenna is approximately \$1,200.

The chloride trailer is falling apart and not legal to be on the roads. John is looking for a new one.

John has also looked into purchasing a sweeper to sweep intersections so it does not have to be done by hand. A new one costs approximately \$17,000, but John would like to look for a used one which should be significantly cheaper.

NEW ROAD CREW MEMBER

The Town is forging ahead with hiring a fourth road crew member. Bill was nominated to help John with the hiring process.

PAST PLANNING COMMISSION WORK

The Planning Commission was present to discuss Town Center Project updates. Gordon Gebauer began by discussing the past Planning Commission work. Primarily they will be discussing the Community Wastewater System. The other issue is the Pigeon property. There is an opportunity for a planning grant that they wanted to talk about.

The Planning Commission has been working for many years to support revitalization of the town center and promote businesses. This does not happen overnight, and it does take a long time. Recently there has been a more development friendly environment and they want to take advantage of that, especially with the downtown neighborhood development area that was applied to the common area last year. Gordon explained how quickly and easily a business could develop, using the Westford General Store & Café as an example. Future development should get the same response to development and speed when they apply to build around the Common.

The Planning Commission was instrumental in acquiring the lands and trails around the school as well as the Jackson property. Over the last year they have received a lot of communication from parties regarding development in the Common Zoning District. These people see the potential for the development in that area. This is a big change from previous attitudes. The Planning Commission has also worked with several public agencies and groups who are excited to help Westford build its future. This is due to all the previous work the Town has put towards revitalization. Westford has been featured by Governor Phil Scott as a town on the move for their efforts towards revitalization. COVID-19 has put a wrench in a couple programs such as the TIF program, however Montpelier is supportive of Westford. The CCRPC has assigned us their own senior planner, Taylor Newton, who was present, to help with development in the Common District.

Westford is not alone in these ambitious kinds of projects. The Town of Warren recently planned, funded, and implemented their own wastewater system. The Town of Montgomery is also working towards community wastewater. Westford has done a lot of work to create great relationships and potential development partners and is poised to see an excellent revitalization of the town center. If the Town could control how the Pigeon property is developed, it could be the spark for further revitalization.

CWSRF & COMMUNITY WASTEWATER STATUS UPDATE AND Q&A

Seth Jensen began the discussion and explained that septic systems in the Common District are old and options are limited. This puts limitations on what can be done with properties in the District regarding developmental, commercial or residential, such as something as simple as the addition of a bedroom to an existing structure. This lowers the value of the existing properties in the District.

Seth wanted to be clear that one thing that is not a goal is asking the Town to pay to replace an individual's septic tank. Every model that is looked at for funding has private users paying user fees to connect and use the community wastewater system.

Seth explained there are several sites that have been identified to support a community system. At the time of the 2008 report, the Planning Commission turned their attention to public and civic properties. What they found is that options are very limited with those properties due to soil conditions. Pre-treatment systems are too expensive to build and maintain and would only serve current needs and not support growth and revitalization. Because of this, the Planning Commission took a second look to the community approach. There are three major things that this allows. The first is that it allows the Town to access state resources that are available because Westford has a designated village center. Westford is eligible for 50% funding if the system serves residential and mixed-use housing. It also allows the remaining cost to be spread over 20 to 30 years for the Town and for users. The current town systems are already at risk. A community system would allow the town to spread general maintenance costs across other users.

When the Town purchased the Jackson Farm, land was reserved for community wastewater. The community system involves several leach fields, but individual lots would still have their own septic tanks. Solids would remain on individual properties. Based on reports, the current conservative estimate is 55 resident equivalents. That does not mean 55 houses, some residential areas use more and some less. It is possible that number could increase up to 110 based on further soil evaluation. The current user allowance is around 38. The rough cost estimate is \$1.8 to \$2.2 million. Per user this would be approximate to the current cost to set up septic in the Common District per residence due to the soils. Seth reminds the Selectboard that finding a place for a modern tank is not possible at the Town Office nor would it be likely for many of the residential properties. Many of the properties in the Common District have also been restricted to one bedroom due to septic restraints. The new system would not have restraints on bedroom numbers and would allow those in the Common District to use their houses to their full value.

Seth explained that the Step 1 application process has taken longer than anticipated and that we may not be able to take full advantage of the wastewater funding opportunities presented to us by the Vermont Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC). It is unlikely that we will be ready for a bond vote in March 2021 as the preliminary engineering report needs to be completed and approved prior to Step 2 submission and final designs need to be close to complete in order to have an accurate bond amount. The Planning Commission knew it would be extremely difficult to complete Step 1 and Step 2 as well as prepare for a bond vote for March 2021 to access the FY 21 Intended Use Plan's \$1.25 million construction subsidy. Similar wastewater funding may be included in future Intended Use Plans and T. Brown of the DEC was confident funding would be available for Westford if, and when, the Town pursued system construction. Once Step 1 is complete a clearer picture of the timeline will be

available. Seth is also hoping that these new reports will answer questions about user and connection fees.

Seth opened the discussion for questions. Julia is trying to get her arms around funding streams for the wastewater project, which at this point she feels are a bit vague. To be clear for everybody as she understands it, the 50% that they have funding for is a loan, but it is forgiven at 100% which basically makes it a grant. Seth explained the PER is 50% forgiveness out of the special projects reserve fund. For final design that is 100% forgiveness so basically a grant but based on how the money is allocated by the State it is not called a grant. For construction we are eligible for 50% forgiveness, and we are locked into that and first in line. Taylor Newton is helping the Town pursue other options that could add more on top of that 50%. The goal is for the Town to pay as close to \$0 as possible. Julia wanted to remind Seth that at the Planning Commission's request of \$5,000 was included in the FY'21 budget for a grant writer. As much as she would like the grant writer to be of use to other boards and commissions, these are big ticket items so she would like to have a discussion with the Planning Commission about getting that started up.

Bill had heard through Jeff Hutchins that the property next to the store has a large septic capacity. He wondered if that is true. Seth said this brings up some questions: What is the actual capacity? Would it be a mound, pipe, conventional system? Need treatment? Location, etc.? Would it bring value to the grand list, or would it just be green space? This topic requires more information and discussion. Seth does not think they are at the point of discounting anything, they just don't have information about it.

1705 VT ROUTE 128 PROPERTY

Mark Letorney and Taylor Newton began discussion on the 1705 VT Route 128 property also known as the Pigeon property. Mark is tasked with keeping the landowner, George Pigeon, with being patient with the Town as well as getting a site plan together for the property.

There have been several site visits. They are mostly looking at the flat area between the Pigeon house and the hotel for mixed used commercial housing. It is important that Westford controls the development of the property so they can control the streetscape, aesthetics, parking, and arrangement of the buildings around the Common. The property would allow them to build multi-use structures. Low-Middle Income (LMI) housing with commercial front is being considered. The second property could be similar or be all commercial or all residential. With these properties they envision public access to the riverfront.

There are a lot of details involved with developing the property and Mark has been involved with everything. At this point, a summary could be that they are making progress and they are doing so in a way that is mitigating costs for the Town. The Planning Commission has secured an engineer that has agreed to donate his time to do the stormwater. CCRPC has gifted us one of their senior planners, Taylor Newton, who has been working with the Town in sorting out the maze of funding and financing. How he envisions this working out is that we create a site plan that would help us go forward with our community development grant. Then we would wait for the Phase 2 brown fields assessment. Then they would know the size of the building envelope and what correction action was needed.

Mark has had lots of conversations with LE Engineering. When LE Engineering issues their final phase 2 assessment, the Town will submit the site plan and base the corrective action off that or help remediate the site plan to work best with corrective action. The property is not

salable until corrective action is taken. The project is somewhat waiting for the assessment and then they can move forward. In the meantime, the wetlands delineation will occur. Mark is really impressed with the talent in Westford and the commitment that the volunteers have put into the project.

This morning they met with the Vermont River Conservancy (VRC) whom they hope to partner with in the purchase of the property. Not only does this mean reduced cost for the Town, but the Conservancy has partnered with a housing nonprofit which opens up funding options the Town would not normally have access to. This would allow the Town to focus on the developmental plan for the property which includes an expansion of the town office building. They are encouraged with their new partnership. Once the Conservancy buys the property, they will gift the property to the Town for \$1. This helps the Town and removes the property owner from public scrutiny.

Allison recalled a conversation with the property owner from earlier in the year where they had discussed the money issue and if he could wait for two years. Mark explained that this has changed now with the new partnership. Instead of the Town agreeing on a purchase price with the landowner, the negotiations will occur between the property owner and the Conservancy. The property owner has a new appraisal of the property as a commercial property. Before the partnership with the Conservancy this was an issue between the Town and property owner. The Conservancy would come in with the intention of preserving the river access and then gift the property back to the Town for \$1. VRC is very interested in the property and with partnering with Westford. A river conservancy with LMI housing opens the project up to a lot of non-profit funding previously unavailable. It takes the homeowner out of the equation earlier and gets the property owner what he wants, selling sooner rather than later. With the VRC involvement it also allows the Town to develop at their own pace.

Julia mentioned that pre COVID-19 the Committee had presented a vision of the property. She is curious if the VRC changes how the Town intends to use the property because obviously their concern is the river access. Mark explained that no, it would not change the usage or what the Town had intended. There would be around eight units in the LMI Housing. If they were serving 12 units or more, they need a public water system for many of the housing orgs. If we locate a well on the VRC property that would be okay with the VRC that they can gift it to the affordable housing unit thus allowing us to establish a history if we do need a public water system going ahead.

Seth explained that with VRC, both housing and conservation and dual projects that do both are the most competitive so the VRC involvement would make Westford more competitive for the redevelopment piece than if they were not partnered. Mark explained that the best way to bring community wastewater before the Town is to partner it with village revitalization. They are doing everything in their power to mitigate the cost to the Town. He wants it to be a no brainer to voters because it will not cost them money.

Taylor Newton from CCRPC was present to discuss CCRPC's roll. The most important thing to establish is site control. That would include the property owner allowing access to the property to complete work on the assessments. Phase 2 of the Environmental Site Assessment has been completed. This included the removal of an underground tank, soil borings, monitoring wells installed, and collection of groundwater and drinking water samples. LE Environmental will have their final report completed sometime this month.

In their preliminary findings, LE Environmental found gasoline contamination located in soil and groundwater around the site of the former underground storage tank. This is thought to extend around the garage. Oil was identified in the parking area to the east and the presence of clay soils on site seem to have contained the contamination. There were not PCBs found and the contamination will be manageable.

The next steps will be to have DEC and EPA review the findings of Phase 2 and based on the findings more site characterization may be necessary. It's important to delineate the full extent of the contamination. A site plan with the proposed uses of the property will be determined. There are different cleanup standards based on the proposed property uses (residential vs commercial). Following this, an Evaluation of Corrective Action Alternatives (ECAA) will be written to determine the best cleanup strategy. The cost to prepare the ECAA is predicted to cost anywhere from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

The Planning Commission is requesting permission to pursue a Community Development Block Grant from the VCDP. This grant would fund the hiring of professionals such as appraisers, surveyors, engineers, and other consultations to gather pre-development site data and develop a site plan for the Pigeon property. This information is required prior to developing a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to address remediation of property contamination. This is a reimbursement-based grant, and the total project cost would be \$60,000 with a 10% match. A public hearing would be needed in August. The application is due on September 8th and the hearing would occur in November 2020. Completed timeline would run through early 2022.

LINE OF CREDIT REQUEST

The Planning Commission requested that the Town of Westford establish a line of credit through a local lending institution for the purposes of assisting with cash flow requirements during the anticipated construction of the community wastewater system. It was Gordon's understanding that the Town has never applied for a line of credit and that this process may take time.

Mark explained that often grants want proof that the Town can pay back a loan; but if the Town has a line of credit this could provide proof. The Selectboard would have control over the line of credit so it would be up to them to use it or not. Bill was concerned that taxpayers may be reluctant that they could pay a bill and they would be sitting back wondering if they are going to get reimbursed for it or not. Gordon explained that with funding partners this would all be spelled out. It is one of the few things he does not worry about.

Bill was also concerned if we could find contractors, etc. that would want to be paid after 90 days and not immediately. Gordon explained that starting the line of credit now means we are shovel ready and ready to go. He does not know who the contractors and engineers will be. Seth will look into the Federal Prompt Pay Act and how it applies to the wastewater grant because it could be 30 days or 90 days. In terms of line of credit use, he suspects the Vermont League of Cities and Towns likely has guidelines that can direct the concerns of taxpayers. He does not believe anything would move forward without funding. It would take a lot if the funding were rolled back once funding was underway. Allison wanted Greg Barrows, Treasurer, to investigate the line of credit. Vicky Ross was present and wondered if the Selectboard had the authority to apply for the line of credit on its own or does it have to go to the voters. And, from a risk management perspective if she were in their shoes, she would want to know what the Town is obligated to do to secure reimbursement. Gordon explained

that a vote for the Selectboard to borrow the money it needed has happened at Town Meeting so yes, they have that authority.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE WITH PROJECT UPDATES

Gordon Gebauer was present to discuss the newsletter article the Planning Commission wanted to put in the newsletter. The public hearing needed would require a public notice so the Planning Commission would love to provide a background on what is going on before the hearing so residents can have an opportunity to know what it is about and ask questions. They would also like to put it on Front Porch Forum. This is contingent on the Selectboard approving the planning grant. Allison has no issues with the planning grant. It seems much of the work is being done and the match is great. Kim Guidry is having a hard time wrapping her head around everything, so she is a bit confused. She would suspect it could be confusing to grasp for other residents, so she encourages very easy to understand and simple language. Usually, a 5th to 8th grade level is recommended for public writing. She added that she understands it is a complex issue. Gordon doesn't think anything in the draft is very complicated or technical. It talks about the projects as they are except without using the abbreviations or technical terms. It gives the voters an opportunity to understand why they are seeking the grant and the opportunity to be heard at a public hearing. Julia would like to take some time to read through the prepared article and get feedback to people before the newsletter deadline. Allison said it was long, but she thinks it gets the point across as simple as possible.

Vicky was curious how in the times of COVID-19 a public hearing would be held. Gordon's understanding was that the hearing would be warned and held by the Selectboard. He anticipates it would a Zoom meeting because the school would not let us in in this situation. Julia is curious how much attention this will get, but the fact that not everybody in Town has access or equipment to access a meeting like this through Zoom is a concern. They should think about an alternative socially distant way for those without Zoom access to participate.

Mark was also thinking about this, he was wishing that one could utilize the Common for a situation like this. Bill was all for a meeting on the Common, he was not sure if it was possible to schedule an alternate weather date for a public hearing. Allison would leave the logistics up to Nanette but acknowledges that with elections at this time that this would be a lot to throw her way. Allison anticipates that issues with a PA system not working well would be a major issue. Even in a good situation before COVID-19 there were accessibility issues. Julia wanted Nanette to note that a standard Zoom account has meetings for up to 100 people; she thinks it would be prudent to go to a pro account so that more users could access this important meeting. Nanette was curious who was going to write the warning for the public hearing. Gordon felt Nanette and Melissa would work on the warning.

WETLAND DELINEATION CONTRACT APPROVAL

Mark Letorney explained that they needed approval for the wetland delineation contract for the wastewater system project. Primary tasks to be performed for the delineation include flagging the wetland boundaries, notifying project manager Brad Washburn when the flagging is in place and recording the information. The total project cost would be \$2,502.35. Allison Hope made a motion to approve wetland delineation contract, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

CWSRF CONTRACT APPROVAL

Seth explained that this is the Step 1 Clean Water Fund. They have submitted and approved the contract, but they need the Selectboard to sign the agreement. Julia will review and sign the document tomorrow.

WIFI SIGNAGE FOR WESTFORD COMMON

Eric Ford was present to discuss the placing of signage for the new public Town Common Wi-fi. He and Julia had a site visit with members of the Common Committee. The three signs will be 6"x8". The signs will remind people visiting the Common of the public Wi-fi, this is an important community amenity. Additional signs are also a possibility to display on other public buildings. The current building sites include one by each parking lot and one on the gazebo. The quote is approximately \$250. They are looking for approval of placement and installation of signs. Mark Letorney volunteered to make the signs in-house. He would only need the artwork and it could be done. George Lamphere, Planning Commission Chair, explained the Planning Commission will bring this up at their next meeting, he expects a full approval. Bill Cleary made a motion to approve placement of signs funding dependent, seconded by Allison Hope. Motion passed: 3-0. Julia thanked the Planning Commission for the incredible work that they have done in pushing these projects forward.

CORRESPONDENCE

Library Trustee Pat Hechmer sent an email to clarify if the Library needs to go out to bid or get quotes for the Library drainage work. In Nanette's opinion if it is less than \$5,000, they do not need to go out to bid.

There have been several correspondences from residents upset that compost was not included in the Town's contract with Myers. Allison reiterated that cost was a big factor in the Selectboard's decision. Bill also explained that Fairfax included compost, but Casella had 50% user put their included compost bins in the recycling which to him indicates many people do not require pick up services.

Nanette reached out to Joe from Myers to get the information about the app for residents. This information will be put in the August Newsletter.

Bill heard from a resident that because of bear complaints, some bears had been trapped and removed from Westford. Julia had also heard that, so it seems there is potentially an individual bear that is too habituated to people that needed to be dealt with.

COMMUNICATION

There was no communication to discuss.

SET FY'21 PROPERTY TAX RATE

Nanette and Greg worked together to put the FY'21 tax rate together. The tax rate is based on the Town budget approved by the voters, the Local Agreement for exempted farm buildings and Veterans' exemptions and the education rates received from the State. The Town tax rate is slightly lower than the projected tax rate presented at Town Meeting. Bill Cleary made a motion to set the tax rate for town, highway, and local agreements at \$0.7107 for residential and non-residential properties, seconded by Allison Hope. Motion passed: 3-0.

Allison Hope made a motion that the first tax installment be due September 15th, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

Greg went over the accounts payable.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Bill Cleary made a motion to go into Executive Session at 9:33 p.m. to discuss personnel, seconded by Allison Hope. Motion passed: 3-0. People in attendance were Julia Andrews, Allison Hope, Bill Cleary and Nanette Rogers. The Board exited Executive Session at 9:39 p.m. No action taken.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julia Andrews, Chair
Selectboard

Callie Hamdy
Assistant Town Clerk

GUEST LIST

Ben Bornstein
Buddy Meilleur (LCATV)
Kim Guidry
Dave Lavallee
Jeff Hutchins
Tom Yager
Gordon Gebauer
Vicky Ross
George Lamphere
Eric Ford
Koi Boynton
Ira Allen
Seth Jensen
Mark Letorney
Bill Sayre
Taylor Newton

TOWN OF WESTFORD HIGHWAY DEPT.
ROAD SCHEDULE
June 26, 2020 – July 23, 2020

Work to be done

- Grade roads.
- Continue with FEMA work.
- Start ditching project on Old Stage Rd.

Work completed

- Added gravel to sections of Allen Irish Rd.
- Graded Allen Irish Rd, Cambridge Rd., Plains Rd., Covey Rd., No. end of Old Stage Rd., No end of Woods Hollow Rd., Huntley Rd., Brookside Rd., Phelps Rd., Pettingill Rd., Rollin Irish Rd., Kilburn Ln., and Stoney Ridge Rd.,
- I did a site visit with FEMA to assess Oct. flood damage.
- Had some front end work done on the F-550.
- Hauled in gravel for road surface work.
- Started hauling in winter sand.
- Repair to the grader.
- Had the compressor motor fixed.

Approved at the 7/23/20 Selectboard Meeting.