

Westford Wastewater Project Communications Team Meeting
Monday, November 29th 2021

Attending: Melissa Manka, Town Planner; Eric Ford, Pat Haller, Seth Jensen, Gordon Gebauer; JB Hinds, Birchline Planning (consultant).

North Road Site Visit: The site visit was successful with a total of 11 attendees, including Pat, Gordon, Seth, and Mark Letorney. 4 attendees are not on a Town board; 3 were part of the North Road group; the rest were Board and committee members, though no selectables. Notably it helped clarify the size of the treatment system features and their relative unobtrusiveness.

RJ Moore's role would be good to document. He was helpful in correcting misconceptions about the soil-based system and its operation. He would also be especially helpful for public presentations about the realities of the system. **Pat will ask him to prepare a written post about how the system works and his role;** it would be important to emphasize (1) that the system has been running and working for 50 years; and (2) the system is a gravity system, which is different from the proposed system that has pumps (which are readily replaced). If RJ can provide support for the system on Front Porch Forum that would be ideal.

Seth noted that folks who have been concerned about odor and noise didn't attend and wondered how much more effort should go into those individuals versus the overall community. Eric emphasized that costs seem to be the most important element to try to nail down.

Costs: Melissa has spoken to Lynnette Claudon at VANR; our request has been submitted to the Governor's office. The indication to Melissa and JB is that there may be sufficient ARPA funding to bring the user fee to a \$56-\$70/month average and whatever is announced in mid-December will be the MINIMUM grant. It may be sufficient to decline the NBRC grant, which would save the town a tremendous amount of administrative effort. An income survey would be the next step in securing further federal funding. It's important to note to the public that 80% is the absolute maximum federal grant; indications are that the federal share provided through the state will be closer to that amount than not, causing crowds to go wild.

JBH noted that she and Amy Macrellis will be working with the engineering team to ensure that the annual O&M costs are truly reflective of the annual cost for contracted operations.

****Note on graywater – in some applications, septic tank effluent with solids settled out is referred to as 'graywater.' In others, particularly where household effluent bypasses a septic system to a soil or surface discharge system, only laundry water properly should be treated as 'graywater.' JBH will provide an FAQ about this to clarify.**

December Communications: A plan is needed for December's announcement from VANR and to ensure that the schedule is nailed down for upcoming events through Town Meeting. Eric wants to ensure that there are positive testimonials as well as scheduling

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JBH stressed that Melissa, Nanette, JBH and David Rugh need to meet ASAP to establish and finalize the schedule for warnings, public notice, hearings, public information meetings, and all of the other statutory requirements. These will be focused on Select Board but will provide the framework for other communications and meetings. **Melissa will schedule with JBH, Dave Rugh, and Nanette for this week to get the schedule nailed down.**

Eric asked what the objective will be with the postcard mailing for January 10th. The mailing may include the number for the bond vote, and should have the schedule for upcoming informational meetings. Once a schedule is established for the legal requirements, the team can decide whether a special stand-alone meeting should occur (probably BEFORE the required public informational meeting on Monday night February 28th) to provide an overview and information for the community. **Eric will add a placeholder to the communications plan** for Jan 31-ish for a community presentation on the system. Once we have the schedule for the legally required warnings and meetings, dates and content can be sent and coordinated with the postcard mailing.

Pat noted that Green Mountain Engineering has been contacting property owners individually to set up meetings. Brad Washburn sent a letter to all property owners which was not reviewed by the committee. Brad had said at the October meeting that he would send the letter to property owners “in a week or two” and he didn’t; he sent one after Melissa contacted him in November. Brad sent Melissa a draft which she wasn’t able to review; he sent it anyway. Emails were then received that property owners were not impressed with the letter. Eric recommended that all potential users receive a kindly phrased letter reassuring property owners that the Town and committee are willing and able to assist, as soon as possible. **Eric and JB will draft a letter and get it to the committee as soon as possible to be sent to all service area land owners.** It also will be essential for GME to offer times that are not in the middle of the day on weekdays. **JB will contact Alan and work out options for other times that can be communicated.**