

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR DECEMBER 13, 2021 MEETING
Approved on January 3, 2021**

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

Commission/Board Members Absent: Koi Boynton

Also, Present: Melissa Manka, Westford Planning Coordinator; Taylor Newton – CCRPC Senior Planner; Tom Hand – SE Group;

Westford Residents: Dan Strobridge; Ed Compco; Britney Kirby; Diane Siegriest; Mary Cavanaugh; Carol Winfield; Tom Orfeo; Rebecca Baczewski; Barb Peck; Lori Johnson; Andre Roy; Amy Radcliff; Barb Cady; Shelia & Joe Franz;

The meeting began at: 6:30 p.m.

Amendments to Agenda

None

Citizens to be Heard, Announcements, Correspondence & Other Business

None.

Minutes of the November 1, 2021 Meeting

Seth Jensen MOVED to approve the minutes as presented.

Mark Letorney noted some corrections and then SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED on voice vote: 5 – 0.

Minutes of the November 8, 2021 Meeting

Seth Jensen MOVED to approve the minutes as presented.

George Lamphere SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED on voice vote: 5 – 0.

1705 RT 128 Property Update:

Tom Hand, a landscape architect from SE Group, a consultant to the Town. discussed the survey responses. 333 responses so far. Survey asked about proposed uses, proposed appearance and density. It also asked respondents to identify what proposed uses are important/not important. A link to the response will be on the website. As a result of public comments, the concept design was changed to decrease the size and number of buildings. It appears the community would like more green space than the original concept design, no real interest in small scale commercial uses, possible parcel for new town office is important to some.

Next Steps: another public informational meeting will be scheduled to get feedback on the new concept design that was changed in response to survey results. We will also engage town resident Lincoln Brown to do some streetscape renderings of what the concept building will look

like from street view.

The Wastewater Outreach committee has concerns about holding another public meeting while the PC is working towards a wastewater bond vote on March 1, 2022. The wastewater project and 1705 project are both very important issues for the community and both involve a considerable amount of information that needs to be provided to the public. The PC does not have the resources to mount a campaign for both projects at the same time. We need to concentrate on providing accurate information on the wastewater project or risk confusing the community on both projects. 1705 needs to wait to have another public outreach meeting and more needs to be done to provide accurate information about what the 1705 project is and what it is not. The wastewater outreach group believes that the first thing that should happen is to explain the mechanics of the 1705 project better and who the proposed development partners are and what their respective rolls will be, and not just move to another meeting on the revised concept design. There seems to be confusion about this project. The PC needs to clarify that the Town is not buying the property and is not developing the property. It also needs to be clarified that if the Town is unable to create a working partnership with the property owners and the proposed development partners, the property will be sold to a third party who can develop the parcel however they want, within the confines of the current wastewater capacity and zoning. It was agreed that additional outreach needs to occur regarding the Town's form-based zoning code for the Town Center area.

Taylor and Melissa will work on creating a revised scope of work. The Brownfields on the parcel are being partially paid for by property owner's insurance and partially through the State's program to remediate brownfield sites. A Corrective Action Plan (CAP) needs to be created. There is money available to create a CAP this fiscal year. Those funds may not be available if the scope of work is pushed out. The Vermont River Conservancy (VRC) will need to see a final concept plan in mid-January in advance of its board meeting in March 2022.

Tom Hand commented that the original timeline was already extended, so the project has experienced some delay. The timeline can be extended but the project team needs to be efficient in how time is spent. It is important to try to get a preferred design concept from the community. Extending the timeline will likely bring us to May/June. We have a June 30, 2022 deadline for this year's fiscal year. Making that deadline will be tight if public outreach is postponed until after March 1, 2022.

Taylor suggested that as part of the continuing public outreach for the 1705 project, that the PC create a series of webinars for the website, explaining who the players are and their respective roles in the project and how the concept planning for this project will proceed. First webinar should be done before January 15, 2022.

Melissa asked PC members to review and comment on the revised 1705 concept plan by December 17, 2021. The new concept and comments will be discussed at the December 20, 2021 PC meeting.

One idea proposed was to hold one public meeting that would address both wastewater and 1705 issues. Taylor does not support this concept as there is a considerable amount of information for each project that needs to be disseminated to the community. Seth offered that if one meeting was being considered, it should have a clear break in the middle, similar to how

Town Meeting and School Board meetings had been run in the past.

The PC, on motion of George Lamphere, seconded by Mark Letorney, voted to approve amended scope of work and project schedule.... with possibility of meeting in January.

Community Wastewater project:

80% of properties within the service area have agreed to connect during construction or expressed a possible interest in connecting. The PC anticipates knowing final capacity figures and grant amounts by late December 2021. We need to have answers by the end of December in order to keep on schedule for a March 1, 2022 bond vote.

Selectboard/PC Meeting on December 14, 2021:

J.B. Hinds provided a current financial analysis and discussed the bond vote language, sewer ordinance language. and timeline to bond vote. In light of the fact that the 1705 project will include a parcel of land for civic use, including a new town office, the PC needs to alert the Selectboard that it will need to put this issue on its future agendas. No set timeline is established for potential new town office, but SB should be alerted to the need to begin considering how a new town office would be paid for.

Mark Letorney suggested that we reach out to Conservation Commission to discuss its potential involvement with any river access trails that are constructed on the 1705 property.

Melissa and JB will update the PC on funding issues. Gordon and Seth will discuss the timeline with the outreach committee. George and Mark will revisit the 1705 timeline.

Minute Clerk:

The PC still needs a minute clerk so that the task does not fall to PC members. Any PC member who takes minutes has a difficult time participating in the PC meetings. It seems that the PC is the only committee in Town without its own minute taker.

ARPA Committee:

The next Town ARPA Committee meeting will occur on December 15, 2021. The recommendations and proposal of that committee will go to the SB later in December. The public survey that was completed shows the most support for broadband infrastructure and wastewater infrastructure.

Newsletter is due December 27, 2021. Wastewater Outreach Committee will work on a post.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:24 p.m.

Submitted by,
Gordon Gebauer, Westford Planning Commissioner

