

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR JANUARY 17, 2022 MEETING
Approved on February 7, 2022**

Commission Members Present: Koi Boynton, Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen, George Lamphere, Mark Letorney

Also, Present: Melissa Manka - Town Planner, Kim Guidry - Resident, Ira Allen - Resident, Maureen Wilcox - Resident, Lori Johnson - Resident, Barb Peck - Resident, Barb Cady - Resident, Jared Willey - Advanced Onsite Services, Robert Sarmanian - Oakson

The Meeting Began: 6:31pm

Amendments to Agenda: We need time to discuss the public records request. This can be covered at the end of the meeting.

Citizens to be Heard, Announcements, Correspondence & Other Business: None at this time

Minutes of the December 20, 2021 Meeting

VOTE: Gordon made a motion to approve the minutes, as amended.

Seth seconded the motion.

Motion carried.

Minutes of the January 3, 2022 Meeting: Not available

Community Wastewater Project

- **Drip Irrigation Systems:** Robert Sarmanian and Jared Willey are here to present on drip systems. Robert is from Oakson out of Massachusetts and Jared is from Advanced Onsite Services in Grand Isle. They are dealers of the Perc-Rite Drip Dispersal Community Systems. Perc-Rite is equivalent as a pressure distribution dispersal of affluent (primary) and used for a wide variety of systems. This type of system was first installed in VT in 2008. Perc-Rite is able to dispose of primary affluent and can be installed using a ditch witch in an existing site based on the grade of the land. It is referred to as an in grade system. The system has different zones that are utilized throughout the day, allowing for rest in recovery across the system. The system is designed for year round operation, even in our northern climates. These types of systems are even in Canada. Robert reviewed his presentation - he showed the overall layout of a drip system and explained how affluent leaves the system and how the system is installed under the surface of the existing grade with a ditch witch. There is no

stone needed for a drip system, just sand. Robert reviewed a number of systems around New England that would be comparable to Westford's size. He showed Oakson's interactive map that shows where systems are installed and the background information on each one. Robert went a little deeper with systems in Vernon, VT, Peru, VT, Bridgton, ME and Windham, ME - all community based. One will even be installed under existing ball fields at a school.

Oakson and Advance Onsite Services work with a designer and assist with the permitting process for these system installs. They are onsite and provide O&M support for the long haul.

Robert opened it up for questions:

Barb asked about the regular maintenance that is needed for drip systems and if woodchucks have ever chewed through the piping. Rob answered that he has never had that experience and any issues with critters and drip systems. There is monitoring built into the system that sits in a small building, it has meters and flow rate monitoring. If something did happen, maintenance is not invasive and is similar to inspecting a vehicle.

George asked that as the chair and meeting facilitator he will call on people for questions. He will start first with the PC and then citizens once the PC has asked all their questions.

Seth asked about the durability of the system and since our system will be in a farm field should we be worried about the soil compaction, deep freeze and why doesn't it freeze. Rob explained that the system is pressurized and self draining. Most of the time the system is dry. When the system is dosing it is pressurized and the warm effluent is forced through the lines. The lines are below frost and are insulated. The pressurization adds to the durability of the system because any root hairs that penetrate the system are spit out as soon as the flow starts. The system was originally designed for crop irrigation so root infiltration is not a problem. The system interacts with the roots and the trees.

Melissa asked about the infrastructure and components before reaching the field. Rob responded that it is a 4x6 foot aluminum skid and suction pumps and control panel. It is like any other storage facility. Any subsurface tanks would be part of the compliance with state code and there are no special requirements for tankage.

Gordon asked what the state requirements are and if the state prefers drip systems and if they do, why - and with a site like Westford's, would the state require a drip system. Rob responded that the EPA did a study to test the soil impact and determine a set of standards for drip systems. That study confirmed that you don't have to add soil or remove trees with drip systems. They can adapt to the contours of the site and allow the natural resources to do the work. The state can not require this type of system. This is a decision of the community.

Mark asked a mechanical question regarding Green Mountain Engineering's suggestion of a 5 zone system that could be a combination of top or bottom fed with a manifold system. Rob explained that you can feed 300 feet and it is better to be long and narrow than short and fat. Mark asked how the valve would work in the snow. Rob explained that it is below ground and insulated within a valve box that deals as a vacuum. When the pump shuts there is no affluent in the valves and it is cleaned through a micron cleaner. You may grow slime, so every system feeds it and a return line that brings it back to flush through at a brisk force to clean the tube of slime. Rob explained that a longer presentation would cover all of this.

Seth pointed out that the community has wondered about the noise, odor, aesthetics and wildlife impact of the system. Rob explained that a drip system is the least impactful system on both erosion and wildlife. There would be very little noise and no odor. You likely wouldn't notice any impact to the field besides seeing the occasional irrigation box at grade. The building site is up to the community and must be maintained at 50 or more degrees and lighted inside. It is not any more than the noise from a control state and if the building is insulated you would likely hear nothing.

Seth: You mentioned that one system is being placed under a school field. Does that mean that a tractor can drive over it? Rob confirmed that a tractor can operate over the site and the site could be maintained as a hay field. As with any system, driving shouldn't happen if the field is saturated with water but mainly so you don't damage the site.

George asked if the effluent that goes through this system has to be different than any other system, any pretreatment that needs to happen especially if it is coming from different sites with different uses - residents vs. commercial food preparation? Rob confirmed that there is no difference and pretreatment is up to the state regulations regarding grease traps - time to cool. There are no further requirements beyond state

regulation. Filters will catch anything that goes down the system that maybe shouldn't go down a drain.

Lori Johnson asked a question about the tubing and how deep it is buried and if there is a problem with animals digging it up. She also asked, because the site is sloped, does the system allow for erosion. Rob responded that the minimum depth is 6 inches and the max is 24 inches. He mentioned that the sweet spot is 12 inches. He has never seen lines dug up but he has seen issues with people putting in fencing or putting up tents. If the system is punctured it will show up in the monitoring and replacement/repairs are very easy. Erosion will impact a septic site and would need to be covered to account for erosion. Your engineers will address erosion control measures in construction and the state will sign off on that. Rob pointed out that erosion has not been identified as an issue on the site. The state allows up to 20% slope or 30% slope and the Westford site isn't even close to that.

Ira Allen asked how important maintaining the grade is in distribution of the lines and when are highs and lows a problem. Ira also asked about one of the slides that showed a device in a hole and if that was the pressure compensating emitter? Rob explained that drip tubing needs to be level within itself so a laser line is used. We want to keep the tubes general level but over 300 feet there is flexibility to go up and down. Rob complimented Ira on recognizing that emitter. The emitters are protected by the filters so that anything will not plug up the lines. Rob speaks of systems that are more than 30 years with the same tubing. He explains that the pressure is worked out at the design phase so the emitter doesn't break away. They are like a golf tee sticking up. Nothing is seen but the impression.

Rob offered to answer more at any time. He is happy to respond to emails or have another meeting. It was pointed out that Rob's offer could be integrated into public outreach. Robert and Jared are always available.

There was a question regarding installation, operation and management and if any specialized equipment or further certification is needed and would a typical construction company be able to install a drip system. Rob pointed out that no requirements are needed beyond being a licensed septic installation company. Some companies are familiar with drip tubing and a ditch witch. The Oakson Or OAC can do the installation or an irrigation company can be subcontracted. O&M should be handled by one entity. There is a prescribed pumping frequency for the end user. Perc-Rite does have several companies that can maintain and they would recommend AOS. What we

encourage with systems is that we train someone that works for the town to be the system operator. They would likely be required to be a grade 1 operator for domestic wastewater but this is based on gallons/day. They would maintain the testing. With formal partnerships AOS can come in once a year or less for an audit, basic maintenance or training. You can contract but it is costly and the training is a better option. The operator would need to carry a license and be trained for operation or record and file reports on sampling.

- **Status Update:** George has created a quad chart for project management. This will help to track engineering efforts for alternative 5 and ensure that we continue to look at alternative 4 for any changes in cost. Quad charts will change week to week based on progress. The PC can provide feedback, if this is a good project management tool to continue to use.

GME will be coming to the PC meeting on February 7th.

1705 Rte. 128 Property Project

- **Amended Scope of Work & Project Timeline:** There was a review of past meeting conversations that determined the scope of work needed to be amended due to capacity of the PC and the Town Planner. After a community meeting regarding the site design concepts, the PC and Planner were unable to keep up with the demands of communication both over FPF and email. The 1705 project does not have a dedicated community group, like the wastewater project does, that can build capacity for the PC and Town Planner by addressing community engagement. Waste Water is a large project alone and requires the full capacity of the PC.
- **Outreach Strategy, Conceptual Plan Revisions, and Timeline:** While it was agreed that slowing down the project made sense. Even with a delayed timeline there are aspects of the project that need to be addressed, such as the community engagement plan for presentation of the revised conceptual plans. Community feedback needs to be gathered and the plans need to be shared in a way that reaches a broad sector of the community. How do we want to get information out there and get that feedback? Taylor Newton's webinars were discussed. These webinars will present the plan and how it reinforces aspects of the Town Plan. There is a question regarding the timeline for release of these informational webinars from Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission. Other direct community engagement ideas were discussed from a public meeting to presenting the conceptual plan at a regular PC meeting. It was suggested

that our contractor SE Group could come up with some suggestions on how to engage the community during a pandemic. They were hired because of their community engagement experience, like their work in South Burlington gathering community input at the library and other town facilities. Melissa will ask the SE Group to suggest how to move 1705 community engagement forward - what do they suggest that is within the timeline and budget and takes the current state of our world into consideration. 1705 revised scope of work will be discussed further at the PC's February 7th meeting. We do need to be sure that the meeting focuses on waste water, therefore we will just want to check in and ensure that we have an amended scope of work.

- **Project Updates:** The appraiser was unable to complete the work in time for the VT River Conservancy (VRC) to apply for VT Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) funding. VRC has been in contact with the appraiser and is hopeful that the work will be complete in January. This demonstrates how all projects are slowed down and it is challenging for all partners to meet the deadlines.

Stormwater and Brownfields are the other project components. An umbrella application is in the works so that VRC and LE Environmental can access more funds for the PAH contamination.

2022 Work Plan & Project Timelines: Melissa reviewed the new format for the work plan and project timelines. It was agreed to use this and provide feedback about what is and isn't working well.

The PC's February 7th meeting will be with GME and looking at alternative 4 and 5. Reviewing SE Group's amended scope of work (to include public engagement plan) and timeline was added to February 7th. It was suggested that the SE Group's project timeline should push community engagement of the conceptual plan to March. Melissa will check with SE Group to ensure that is possible. The PC should review the conceptual site plan at the PC's February 21st meeting.

January Newsletter/FPF Articles: The Newsletter is due the 24th. Seth suggested using the FPF post that explained the delayed bond vote for wastewater.

Meeting Wrap Up: Records request - Nanette and the Town Treasurer are pulling together information to respond to the request from a community member regarding the waste water project's funding. The Treasurer and Bookkeeper are confirming numbers. It was discussed that providing a narrative to go along with the areas of funding should be included. It was noted that

what is included in the records is the responsibility town offices wide and doesn't just fall to the PC. It includes town staff and the SB. Melissa explained that the information is gathered and shipped off. She emphasized that this is decades of information. It was stressed that Including a narrative from the PC could be helpful since it is such a large volume of information and spans many years and the PC is the most familiar with the information. Melissa will have a follow up conversation with Nanette to determine how to make this happen. The PC would like to ensure that everyone is in the loop on how the information will be shared and if a narrative can be included. Melissa will follow up with Nanette.

Adjourn: 9:00 pm