

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR JANUARY 3, 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, Pat Haller - Resident, Barb Cady - Resident, Sheila & Joe Franz - Residents, Maureen Wilcox - Resident, Barb Peck - Resident, Lori Johnson - Resident,

The Meeting Began: 6:31pm

Amendments to Agenda: Extensive time built into the agenda but because of new information from engineers and consultants, time may be trimmed.

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

Minutes of the December 13, 2021 Meeting

VOTE: Mark made a motion to approve the minute as amended.

George seconded the motion. Koi abstained.

The motion carried.

Community Wastewater Project

- **Bond Vote Timeline/Delays:** In order to have a town meeting to inform the community on the bond vote, the PC built out a timeline. December 31st was the date to hear from the state regarding funding. We set that deadline knowing that we needed a clearer understanding of the project's funding model in order to have a bond vote. It is important to know the full financial picture and since we do not, it makes sense to pause at this time and consider a bond vote for November 2022. This is a good date because it can be built into voting day.

We also learned that the soils at the Maple Shade Town forest are better than anticipated and could allow for a different system. We need time to understand this and determine if a new design option is the right fit for the town. We found this out on December 13th, which does not give us enough time to incorporate this new option into a bond vote.

The PC believes it makes sense to pause until we have more information from the state and the engineers and not move forward the bond vote with the Selectboard.

We thought we would hear from the state 2 weeks ago. Melissa reached out to Lynette at the state. She confirmed on December 21st that Westford's funding request is still with the Governor and she has not heard back.

VOTE: Gordon made a motion to delay the bond vote to no later than November 2022. Koi seconded the motion.
The motion carried.

Mark emphasized that we are 9 weeks away from March voting and citizens would need 4 to 5 weeks to digest financial information to consider the bond vote. They need to know the costs and understand the benefits.

Seth pointed out that this is a system that, like the North Road system, will serve the town for 50 years and it is ok to take a few months to make the right decisions.

Koi pointed out that we do need to take time to celebrate the good work that has been done. Forming the outreach committee engaged more community members and we did a great deal of work in the past few months to inform our community of this project and secure funding. Melissa reinforced that we should also be grateful for the work done to secure the Jackson farm and what a benefit it is to have those great soils. We also found great community support within the village users.

It was noted that it is important to inform the SB of the delayed bond vote formally and consider that they have a busy January.

It was decided that George will let the SB and Nanette know this evening over email. He will inform them that a more formal memo is on the way and a post will be going up on FPF. Gordon will draft the memo and work with the outreach committee to draft a FPF post. The memo will be sent to the SB and Nanette on Wednesday and the FPF post will go up on Thursday.

Melissa had contacted the town attorney regarding bond vote language and will follow up with him to not move forward with this.

The state can be informed when we next talk to them. They should realize that this is the only avenue since they understand the timeline for moving a bond vote forward and the need for secured funding to do so.

- **Plan & Timeline for Review of Preliminary Design w/ Green Mountain Engineering & Agency of Natural Resources:** There was a call with Green Mtn Engineering (GME) this morning. They have proposed a change in design that will provide an added value to the town. They were asked to prepare a proposal and present it at the end of the month. The original Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) included four options and this is a new option but one of those others might still be the right solution. If there is something that

is better than the existing designs in the PER, then we need time to consider it. We need to learn about the engineering concepts and make a decision on how to move forward.

Looking at our timeline, the next PC meeting is on January 17th. That is a tight timeline for GME to be ready for a new proposal and presentation. We may have a special meeting at the end of January or early February. Gordon asked if they would be providing a proposal for review prior to a presentation. The PC can request a written proposal. GME has also offered a list of communities that have implemented this new design and an expert that could present to the PC about the engineering. George stressed that we don't want the design concept to overshadow the need to understand the new cost implications of the new system. The balance between understanding the system and the financial implications was discussed further. It was decided that the PC needs to request that proposal materials are delivered 7 days prior to presentation. George will follow up with GME and let them know that we need any proposal materials to us 7 days prior to a presentation.

- **Governor & Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources Funding Commitment:** It was discussed that the state has a PER that does not include a 5th design option. If there is a new alternative system we need to understand what that process with the state looks like. Are we going back to stage one or where we are at now? Do we need to submit a revised PER to the state and what is the impact of that on the timeline? We also need to understand if the state prefers one system over another and is that based on the environmental impact of the system or other factors. That discussion with the state will inform us on if this is the system that makes sense for our town and what the funding would be from the state. Melissa and Seth need to be involved in these state conversations, these are not conversations for GME to have. Seth points out that the EPA rules impact when the soiling borings can happen. This situation emphasizes that having soil borings at the PER stage and not the Step 2 stage is very important to inform a project. We need to emphasize this to the state so that other towns don't deal with this in the future.

Citizens to be heard: Lori Johnson appreciates that the PC is looking into additional information regarding a drip system.

Regarding the state funding proposal, how do we get a better understanding of their timeline? The proposal has been with the Governor since before Thanksgiving. It is clear that he has a great deal going on right now but we can't be in February and March and still not know if we have funding. George and Melissa will work on scheduling a meeting with the state to discuss the funding and the new design option.

Project Timelines & Work Plan: George will inform GME that we would like them to present at the PC's February 7th meeting and that we need proposal materials 7 days prior to that meeting. George and Melissa will work on scheduling a meeting with the state and GME.

January 17th will be dedicated to 1705. We should also discuss the Northern Border Regional Commission grant award and if we are moving forward with that and what the amendments are for the grant agreement.

Adjourn: 7:52pm