

TO: Melissa Manka, Taylor Newton
FROM: Tom Hand
CC: All Attendees
DATE: December 15, 2021
RE: Westford- Pigeon Property Public Meeting | December 15, 2021 Committee Meeting #3b

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Attendees

<i>Name, Title</i>	<i>Organization</i>
Taylor Newton	Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
Melissa Manka	Town of Westford
Stephen Diglio	KAS Consulting
Steve Libby	Vermont River Conservancy (VRC)
George Lamphere	Westford Planning Commission
Mark Letorney	Westford Planning Commission
Julie Curtin	Champlain Housing Trust
Tom Hand	SE Group
Mark Kane	SE Group
Elena Juodisius	SE Group

Discussion

- 1 Tom summarized memo on public engagement feedback and responses:
- 2 Desire for lower density, Green Mountain is open to developing residential only
- 3 River access was valued
- 4 Parking did not want to be seen from the street – do we even need a parking lot if residences each have
- 5 individual driveways, think of more as residential infill rather than a development.
- 6 Discussion had on using platform for municipal places. Relationship between town office and library is
- 7 critical, rather than taking over private land for municipal development, keeping the uses on the 1709 lot.
- 8 Tom requested a further decision on this.
- 9 Melissa – intention of the town was to rebuild and expand in current location, boundary line adjustment to
- 10 acquire more land. Not currently redesigning town hall at this time but would like more property when they are
- 11 ready to design. Write out that lot as future area for expansion. Do not show as large parking lot, will be
- 12 concern. The focus on 1705 and CVP(?) grant will be that parcel, and future expansion and rebuild of town
- 13 office.
- 14 Grey out, show ortho, render as grassy for now.
- 15 Town is still thinking that 1705 parcel is a viable option to rebuild town office – need to have that
- 16 communication. George said that a good group of people were at the meeting on 12/14/2021 and they
- 17 understood that there wouldn't be money there – will be good to show on revised concept. Town has work to

18 do there on communicating that message. Taylor enforced – the funding source is about developing affordable
19 housing, preserving pigeon house is important. Town wants to stay close to the library, etc. At some point want
20 to make sure that whatever lot has pigeon home on it is legal lot, could be municipal use, private. Could tear
21 down pigeon home to build town office.

22 Melissa – VHCB – historic preservation as triple goal included in the plan

23 Steve Libby – Application: public access, affordable housing, other beneficial municipal uses are acceptable.
24 VHCB would want to know if there was an undetermined use of a portion of the property – would change what
25 we have talked to them about so far, might not be part of the funding which would complicate the appraisal – its
26 currently for whole parcel, not subdivision. Julie assumes VHCB would want an easement, can't release once it is
27 put in place so need to decide

28 Tom – Pigeon property – the ultimate end use could impact the whole site plan – if pigeon house is commercial
29 with café, offices than need the parking shown, but if it becomes single-family as own driveway than that will be
30 different as well.

31 Steve Diglio – much is contingent on WW being approved. Some thought on wastewater options for town office
32 and pigeon home to maintain existing uses.

33 Melissa – Town will vote on WW March 1st. Will see what state AARPA funds will be available – seems like it is
34 high. Hopes community votes in favor because this is most promising amount of money. Because this project is
35 controversial and scary to folks, need to make sure the WW bond vote passes.

36 Taylor – to ease convo with VHCB, we determine that pigeon home is perpetually affordable housing. Will need
37 very substantial rehab. Is CHT interested in putting that into shared equity program? Julie – couldn't commit to
38 pigeon. Other homes are looking at using habitat which is a well-regarded combination. If there is a source of
39 funding to do rehab work and keep units affordable, there wouldn't be an issue stewarding the additional units
40 in the pigeon house.

41 George – what about moving boundary line so that existing pigeon home is part of lot that currently holds the
42 town office and parking lot, so that the town would take on the pigeon home. Melissa – is that too much of a
43 risk? Steve – complicate appraisal office – its currently being appraised as a single lot, if that was carved off
44 would have to restart it. Talking with pigeon family trust on purchase, would be tricky with Mr. Pigeon.

45 Mark – Pigeon house must be part of overall appraisal in order to get the amount desired. The town is not at a
46 point to make decision about wanting the Pigeon house at this point in time. The only possible desire is to carve
47 out a lot after the acquisition of the property and sell at market value to rehab for someone to buy, fix up and
48 rehab.

49 Steve- the conversation with VHCB is that all of the property will be affordable housing, public access or
50 municipal use. They won't try to purchase the house and then plan to subdivide for private sale

51 Mark – then must commit that its going to be an undetermined municipal function or future affordable housing
52 function. Melissa – the renovation would be intense. Could be something the town rents out for commercial
53 space. Stephen – if it's between municipal use and affordable housing, could it be town parking lot for river
54 access as a municipal use? Concerned that the house has 50/50 chance of renovation. Melissa – do not want
55 main street to be all parking lot though, public and form-based code will not allow parking lot as first lot layer.

56 George – initial designs showed the site as undetermined use, wondering why it's a concern. Mark - The clarity
57 around the mix of uses that are compatible with funding source has come up as of today, as well as public lack of
58 interest in commercial space. Steve – If pigeon house has commercial use, could retain historic integrity, could
59 retain VHCB goals by retaining historic character. Taylor – likes that approach. Melissa- if VHCB were to sell it
60 privately with deed restrictions on historic preservation... Steve – may be agreeable to VHCB, would need to

61 have discussion, would have some historic preservation easement. Rehabbing structures for commercial use is
62 fine. Melissa – VC designation so people can get tax credits for residential or commercial resignation. Mark –
63 back to Steve’s point the WW has to be in place to support.

64 Tom – What is the use of the Pigeon House? Whose lot is it on? Who controls each of those lots?
65 Taylor: communicate to VHCB that the use is undetermined and will have historic preservation as, will prioritize
66 uses as affordable housing, commercial, and thirdly municipal. Need to confirm if historic preservation +
67 commercial use is viable according to VHCB.

68 Steve – VHCB is interested in supporting full town visioning and understanding of what needs of community is
69 and how they want to see the Town Common. They might be fine with housing, commercial and municipal as
70 long as they are in line with community intent.

71 Mark – likes that approach and flexibility. If we do that, we probably need to show the Pigeon house on plan as a
72 bit of a black box, because we can’t commit to a certain land use at this point.

73 Julie – Clarifying question around priorities. Julie – in this area affordable housing we are looking at affordable
74 homeownership, so rental is not an option. Have seen easements with historic and conservation – and lot
75 carved out. Point of concern if historic restriction is compatible with needs in long run, considering cost of
76 renovation and potential parking needs. Unsure about the wastewater and uses makes it hard to

77 Steve – Appraisal – could ask to have them appraise the whole lot and one carving out a reasonable pigeon
78 parcel.

79 Taylor noted appraisal is due today.

80 Tom – can we go through a subdivision later with revised appraisal? Steve – Yes, could be second phase. Once
81 there is an agreement with pigeon family trust on buying the site, then we would have a purchase sale
82 agreement. Then we could work with VHCB on showing them a couple different options to determine what
83 would be agreeable to them – it does make it more complicated. Do need to make deal with pigeon family trust
84 at this point.

85 Mark – is this an all or nothing deal? Steve – its been discussed as the whole thing. Mark – maybe a better
86 approach is to have pigeon family trust retain the portion with the house on it. Melissa – I think that’s why
87 Pigeon family wants to get rid of it because that’s the part that has complications with it. Mark – then the
88 appraisal would have to be apportioned... do it retroactively or pro-actively.

89 George – Can site plan show pigeon house as residential/commercial space and keep it all one lot, and that’s the
90 site plan? And if someone decides to add boundary lines later and carve it up, that gets done at a later date?
91 Taylor – would like to have a plat with future boundary lines as part of this process. Not till later this spring.
92 Want to have lot lines on the plan once we agree on it. George – imagines there is more money in the value of
93 project if pigeon house can be sold as a separate unit by VRC, VHCB, or a project partner to put on open market.

94 Mark – if you did it proactively, that the pigeon trust retains it, but Melissa – 99% sure that they have no interest
95 in it, and this also extends timeline. Taylor says that they also want them to take it all and take it now. Tom –
96 Julie initially mentioned CHT taking on rehabbed pigeon house, could be separate lot. If its commercial, CHT or
97 Town probably don’t want to manage that. Melissa – ultimately, they will all need to be on their own lot. Tom –
98 parking and two new units are a lot, is the public access in the back an easement or its own lot. Taylor – a
99 boundary line adjustment on west side for town, pigeon house on its own lot, affordable housing lots as one or
100 two for the two buildings, and then the river access its own lot owned by the town. Tom – 3-4 lots depending on
101 if CHT/Green Mountain development is 1 or 2. Melissa – current plan the footprint does not exceed what form-
102 based code allows. George – 18 spaces would be on CHT lot with shared parking agreement. Tom also suggested
103 splitting lot line across parking lot with half of the spaces for the public access. Other option would be to capture

104 whole thing and retain easements. George – paving and snow removal is expensive, would need to have
105 maintenance clarity. Taylor- roles and responsibilities is important conversation but lets decide on pigeon house
106 first. Noted we have a legal budget as part of project to carve out these easements. Mark – figure out what the
107 pigeon house lot looks like with access to municipal wastewater – because no project without the WW. Taylor –
108 unknown is VHCB reaction, but for now assume public WW will be available. Will prioritize future uses however
109 VHCB sees as agreeable; 1st retain by CHT as affordable. 2nd sell for commercial. 3rd municipal use. 4th move
110 building to another site in Westford. Mark - Hard to commit to retaining historic use – would be hard to commit
111 for municipal use – don't want to get trapped with adaptive reuse costs. Melissa – Commit to town use – Tom –
112 could also get torn down and rebuilt differently for affordable housing could work with plan, doesn't fight. Could
113 say: its residential, don't know if we can save the house or not. Melissa - Will be controversial as soon as they
114 know it has to go people will want to save it. George – could be affordable housing, historic renovation for
115 personal housing, commercial office space. As accurate as we can be as show as TBD. Doesn't help Steve and
116 presenting for grant funding. Other housing will have to be carved up on their own lots later anyway. Melissa –
117 Steve needs to know by January 10th when application to VHCB is due. Write it so that VHCB can fund the
118 portions that they want to fund, but there might be an apportioned area that they are not funding, which is
119 conceivable. Mark – then who picks up the rest of the bill? Steve – why original had affordable housing and river
120 access only, potential for municipal use. No commitment to that, but potential. Mark – Easiest commitment to
121 make is that it is affordable housing – either retains historic or gets torn down and rebuilt. The decision doesn't
122 have to be made now, it would just have to be viable as housing to make it work. Julie – that makes sense to get
123 through the critical next step with VHCB and seller, have seen scenarios with 6 units of housing, 4 units. Seems
124 ok – buy us time to figure out the configuration based. Mark – don't commit to more than that, could be two
125 units, three units.

126 Tom - hard lot to divide with a pocket park. Melissa – pocket park is not important; the yards are important.
127 Mark – good to keep pigeon lot bigger than possible for adaptive reuse.

128 Water system – may need to have a shared well. Shared access management, well, etc. can be reached – not
129 shared maintenance. Julie - The higher those costs the less affordable the units are, best to reduce those.

130 Melissa – we can work on those legal documents when we got through the plat. Mark – for 5.1-5.2, put the
131 parking in 5.1's lot and do a shared easement on that rather than carving up lot lines through the parking lot.
132 Melissa – the regulations won't allow for that anyway. Tom – are we dividing 5.1 and 5.2 onto separate lots?
133 Melissa will check regulations. George – likes that pedestrian have only one road to cross, and that pigeon house
134 driveway doesn't have to cross footpath. Melissa – agree to keep driveway to the west – but would have to back
135 out on 128. Mark – a three car lot, won't be easily trafficked across pedestrian path, might need to have fire
136 access to back of pigeon house anyway. Accounting for 3 spaces off the town parking lot could impair town
137 expansion or WW. Stephen – shared access is possible – Taylor – not concerned – several BVTbike path single-
138 family driveway crossings and is not a concern to keep driveway to pigeon on east of site. Tom – if pigeon house
139 has two units, will need 4 spaces. Melissa – keep parking as far back as possible. George – likes lineup of ped
140 path and gazebo. Julie – from a marketing standpoint wants some input in design, ADA and proximity to house.
141 Right next to side back door. Tom – Melissa and I can work on lot line concept, Melissa – appears that 5.1 and
142 5.2 can be a shared lot according to zoning, will have shared. Tom – preferable to not have internal setback
143 requirements. Taylor – if making a condo anyway, doesn't matter how many units are on it, right Julie? Probably.
144 George – confirm landlocked parcel is ok? Melissa – we removed frontage requirements, can have a 40' ROW to
145 access. Could designate path and driveway as the ROW to the rear lot. George – Northern boundary line – could
146 it just go strait across? Melissa – Can't have more than 15 degree deviation from perpendicular on lot lines.

147 Tom – boundary lot adjustment – will this complicate appraisal? Mark – can we just have it as a parking access
148 easement? Melissa – paying for plat now, might as well do survey work now and save it. Steve – can have plat
149 drawn up as basis for future subdivision. Aren't talking about subdivision now. Don't want to commit based on
150 survey fees. Taylor – River conservancy, once fully acquiring property, will be able to use that to subdivide the
151 property, Steve - as long as that line works for all the setbacks, utilities, etc. Mark – that other concern on pigeon
152 property don't fully know the final form, if we establish through platting
153 Melissa- whoever owns WRL, given the wetlands, it is in best interest that more things are municipally owned
154 because municipality has more flexibility (side setback is 5 min). Mark – why do this now? Melissa – saves
155 money and helps fit public narrative of acquiring more land for public use and expansion. If we merge it later,
156 even better for town interest. Tom -depending on future use of pigeon house, does this expansion burden the
157 future pigeon house? Mark – have to assume WW is going through. We do have an issue with coming up with
158 plat is the indeterminate boundaries of the parcel.

159

160 Tom – Agenda

161 CAP – may be tricky. Should this be estimated now? Stephen – Can come up with overall estimate but will
162 depend on the redevelopment plan. Taylor – will need to have concept plan in place before full estimate, the
163 plan is once PAH are fully delineated, seek funding for a CAP. Stephen – might qualify for EPA redevelopment
164 grant for contamination. Overall budget wise, we can come up with a concept that we can assume, running
165 north along filling the ravine, can plan to fence the ravine – Tom – also a culvert replacement and stormwater
166 side. Steve – VTrans largest concern was the culvert – would love to transfer that to catch basin at edge of ROW
167 so that everything after that is property owners responsibility. Melissa – might be easier than the headache of
168 working with VTrans on filling ditch, etc.

169 Taylor – told that we won't be finalized in concept until February. Will need to understand if CCRPC will transfer
170 into next fiscal year if we work past February

171 George – Public engagement and outreach – we have to do some more prep work on next public meeting –
172 project partners, Green Mountain, CHT, VRC - will need to spend time with everyone one on one on fine-tuning
173 message, identifying clarity of what housing looks like – for example here is a three unit building, here is what it
174 looks like, here is how it operates, how funding works, how ownership works – put a bow on it to explain. Taylor
175 – got someone to do visualizations who is a local Westford resident for free – Lincoln Brown will do 3D
176 visualizations of what the SE Group plan looks like for January meeting. Mark – need to approve this
177 hypothetical architecture – the ask for the next public meeting, we need to say we haven't figured out the
178 details yet, but we need the general public. Melissa – the public doesn't quite understand the fundamentals of
179 "this party's responsibility, this parties goal, etc. we weren't able to understand the fundamentals. We need to
180 focus on the basics rather than site plans. WW outreach committee wants to work with this group to make sure
181 the two communication plans work together, and no stepping on toes. January meeting and Monday's planning
182 commission meeting we will confirm that it's the January 1705 meeting. Mark – the application is going in
183 January 10th, that is going to make an impact. Steve – Important timing wise – what I need to apply is a purchase
184 agreement with the owner if we can negotiate effectively. Will need a letter of support prior to board meeting –
185 have selectboard issue by middle/end of February. Remaining outreach might not guarantee this by end of
186 February. Another VHC board meeting in May, with February submission date, not sure if that's ok. Melissa –
187 appraisal is being done assuming its fully remediated, and that second tank is not leaking, as if all PAHs are
188 remediated. Would be negotiating with George, use that to meet the deadline.

189 The ask of the committee: not approving construction. Not asking what they want, but to approve the best we
190 got.

191 George – the 40-50 people that attended last night’s PC meeting are expecting to come back in Jan to review
192 draft concept to provide feedback on plan revision, not that it has been decided already.

193 Mark – then the application needs to be filed later. Melissa – I think the revised plans will be acceptable. Ok to
194 show conceptual plan for application with assumption that it will be tweaked.

195 Steve – need to get support letter from selectboard in middle of February – is this timeline ok for selectboard?
196 Melissa – they might be ready to approve now. They are glad they took input from public surveys, the revised
197 plan. They understand the importance of this project, by February could be willing to give support. Won’t be
198 given right at this very minute given that we haven’t had a meeting post the November meeting – the dust is still
199 settling. Mark – it would be nice to be able to frame up what the foundational elements of each project - two
200 units isn’t viable, etc. and be able to articulate we want your feedback but it needs to be framed around project
201 goals and requirements. Melissa – whose responsibility to sort all of this out in advance of the meeting – how
202 much more are we going to set up to prepare for the meeting? Mark – ideally planning commission would be at
203 the meeting and say this plan is good enough for now, good enough to move forward. The planning commission
204 should be the ambassadors of this. Melissa – PC is discussing about the communication and outreach plan to
205 make people less confused. Taylor – I will do a couple quick slides (not for Monday) of the fixed points. Public is
206 confused about who is doing what – will work on having this outlined by January. Make prerecorded videos over
207 zoom that people can be doing what that can be sent out ahead of time. Help t-up PC to be ambassadors of the
208 fixed points. Taylor to connect w/ Steve L. on purchase to sale agreement on Monday to discuss appraisal and
209 acquisition.

210 Tom – PC is meeting next week to do final approval of scope, also approval of January. If we keep pushing that
211 meeting out then it pushes out timeline – but if we submit without community support, lack of clarity around
212 wastewater, seems like maybe those things should fall in place. Also getting in agreement with pigeon trust
213 sooner rather than later. Put offer together, get selectboard approval before community gets overwhelmed.

214 Melissa – I see both points. From PC perspective right now, there is not agreement on whether to have meeting
215 in January or push it out. Tom – Gordon’s perspective of this project sabotaging wastewater, or if there is
216 support of this project than people will be more understanding of need of wastewater. Melissa – this is PC
217 responsibility. I have so much work. I see all perspectives and don’t know what to say. Tom – January meeting,
218 review public comments, update plan, get resolution, present to selectboard for final approval and get letter by
219 middle of February – a fair amount of work after January. Steve – once we get appraisal, sit down with pigeon
220 family trust, talk about where they are at and their timeline, see how they feel about the timeline. The more I
221 hear about the community process, the 10th timeline feels tight, hope the pigeon family trust. Would prefer to
222 wait for next VHCB round – will talk to them if it makes a big difference. Melissa – what about the UPW – Taylor
223 will worry about the stormwater study in February.

224 Decisions – for now, January 24th, either we will push it back because of WW or because George Pigeon gives us
225 more time.

226 Tom – will probably engage with Hoyle Tanner about culvert replacement design ahead of January.

227