

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 7, 2022 MEETING
Approved on February 21, 2022**

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

Commission/Board Members Absent: None

Also, Present: Melissa Manka, Westford Planning Coordinator;
Westford Residents: Ira Allen; Kim Guidry; Barb Peck; Shelia & Joe Franz; Lori Johnson; Pat Haller; Katy Harris.

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

Amendments to Agenda

None

Citizens to be Heard, Announcements, Correspondence & Other Business

None.

Minutes of the January 3, 2022 Meeting

Gordon Gebauer MOVED to approve the minutes as presented.

Seth Jensen SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED on voice vote: 5 – 0.

Minutes of the January 17, 2022 Meeting

Mark Letorney MOVED to approve the minutes as presented.

George Lamphere SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED on voice vote: 5 – 0.

Commission Chair, George Lamphere explained to citizens attending the meeting that PC meetings are public, but they are not public hearings. While the PC always likes to hear from citizens, there are times when time considerations prevent prolonged discussion and comment in order to move through the PC agenda. The PC will continue to invite public comment at its meetings but may have to limit discussion at times in order to complete its meeting agenda.

Community Wastewater project:

Green Mountain Engineering (GME) is ceasing operations by February 18th. GME lost half of its staff over the last several months and is unable to find qualified employees to fill the void. This leaves the Town in a tough position. We need to find another engineering firm to work with the Town and other partners to bring this project to completion. The PC will send an email this week to GME outlining the Town's expectations as to work completed and work in progress.

Melissa has spoken with Amy Macrellis at Stone Environmental. Stone may be able to take over as the project engineer and then sub-contract with a firm like GME to work towards completion. The State of Vermont appears to be amenable to this outcome. Progress on moving the wastewater project forward will be delayed while we look for a new engineering firm. At a minimum we need to receive from GME:

- Amended PER including alternative #5—drip system (Amended PER not yet finished)
- 30% documents for submission to State of Vermont ANR
- All files in GME's possession that relate to the wastewater project including CAD.

It was the general consensus of the PC members that it would be a good resolution if Stone Environmental could take over leading the project and then sub-contract the engineering work. Whatever engineering firm we end up hiring, they will need to support the PER, as amended, in order for the Town to move forward with the State.

Brighter News: We received notification from the State that the Town will be awarded a grant of \$2,377,000 from ARPA funds for construction of the wastewater system. If an income survey of the service area is performed, we may receive additional funds. The Town should receive a contract from the State within the next several weeks. ARPA funding is still evolving, so new information and updates are likely. The ARPA grant funding is in addition to the NBRC grant of \$466,000 we were notified about in December. However, due to limits on how much federal money can be used towards village infrastructure projects, we may need to find a way to finesse both awards to be able to take advantage of the maximum amount possible. Ultimately, the NBRC grant may end up being less than the committed amount of \$466,000. The PC will likely also seek local ARPA funding from the amount the Town has been awarded.

All in all, the grant funding offers are beginning to approach the 80% mark, which is a huge financial benefit to the Town. This makes the project much more affordable both for the users of the system and taxpayers outside of the service area. We will need to work with the State and our funding sources to make sure we can use as much NBRC grant funding as possible. NBRC would like the Town to move forward as soon as practicable so that NBRC knows how much funding it may have available for other projects. We will continue to move forward on this front.

Project Management/Beta Schedule Software

The selection and development of some type of scheduling software is not as time sensitive now that GME is stopping operations. However, we do need to make a decision on software and format moving forward. It may be worthwhile to have project management software to help with scheduling. George has looked into this and recommended the project management software named Monday. We will review and discuss again at the PC meeting on March 7th.

Priority List Application

This is required annually to get money from the CWSRF. Melissa completed this year's application with the wastewater engineering team. ANR recommends we stay with the cost estimates for alternative #5, but do not need to include contingency for a new engineering firm. Melissa will send the Town's Priority List Application to the State within the next 14 days.

Public Records Request

The PC hopes to provide information about costs and income of the wastewater project as far back as 2007. The PC will prepare a narrative to help explain the costs and funding, including the sources of funding and grant offers. The Town Treasurer will provide a spending analysis as well, but that will not include any narrative and is not up to date with regard to other funds the Town will receive. The SB will take up this issue at its February 10th meeting.

1705 RT 128 Property:

Things are moving slowly. George prepared a statement outlining current status of this project. The appraisal is now complete. The VRC and the landowner are in discussion about a potential purchase. The Town is not involved in these discussions. VRC is looking at an appraisal of a separate parcel of land in Town. The Town is not part of these discussions. The Town is waiting to hear from VRC and the landowner.

The Town is waiting to receive the revised scope of work and timeline from SE Group. We hope to have this for the next PC meeting. We have received a couple of webinars from Taylor at CCRPC, but not ready to put on website yet. Seth suggests that one webinar be dedicated to explaining why VRC is interested in this location and why this is a good location to preserve.

Seth cautioned that if VRC moves forward, we must be aware of several other issues:

- ability to provide potable water to contaminated private wells
- consider remote pumping technology for fire protection
- potential use for overflow parking at Town office and around Common.

Resignation

Koi Boynton is resigning from the PC and tonight is her last meeting. This is a tough challenge given all the PC has on its plate. We are all sad to see Koi leave. The PC will need to work to find a new member as soon as practical. PC will post the vacancy online and on FPF and will seek applications from interested individuals. Probably will be the end of March, at the earliest, that the PC will review and discuss applications.

Work Plan

George will not be available for the February 21st meeting. With Koi Boynton's resignation, that will leave only 3 other members of the PC available for the meeting on the 21st. The PC will keep the meeting on the 21st scheduled but recognizes that it may need to be canceled if a quorum is not available. Seth will chair this meeting. We still need a minute taker. Melissa will ask Callie if she is interested and available. The PC approved up to \$100 to pay Callie or another person to take the minutes of this meeting. The SB has this issue as a budget item for Town Meeting and hopefully the PC will have its own minute taker by April 2022.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:03 p.m.

Submitted by,
Gordon Gebauer, Westford Planning Commissioner