

**TOWN OF WESTFORD**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**MINUTES FOR APRIL 4, 2022 MEETING**  
Approved on May 16, 2022

**Commission/Board Members Present:** Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen, and Mark Letorney.

**Commission/Board Members Absent:** George Lamphere.

**Also, Present:** Melissa Manka (Westford Town Planner), Barb Peck, Sheila Franz, Joseph Franz, Carol Winfield, Tina Shoup, Benjamin Bornstein, Kim Guidry (joined after executive session), Ira Allen (joined after executive session), Lori Johnson (joined after executive session), Amy Macrellis (joined after executive session), and Maureen Wilcox (joined after executive session).

The meeting began at: 6:40 p.m.

**Amendments to Agenda**

G. Gebauer and S. Jensen asked that a VTrans request to repaint the crosswalk and a recommendation to work with Julia Andrews on the public engagement meeting materials/presentations be added to the agenda. The Commission agreed.

**Citizens to be Heard, Announcements, Correspondence & Other Business**

M. Manka said the Commission received the following correspondence:

Email from B. Peck asking whether the Town requested a VTrans road safety audit for Route 128 in the Common Area. G. Gebauer responded that the Commission has not discussed the matter and is not at a point where permits are being sought. If permits are sought by individuals or organizations, they would be required to meet VTrans standards and receive necessary permits. Letter from P. Birnholz following up on his recent interview with the Planning Commission. No action necessary.

Application for appointment from Mo Reilly. Accepted by Commission.

**Interviews (Executive Session)**

G. Gebauer MOVED to enter executive session at 6:45 pm.

M. Letorney S. Jensen SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED: 3 – 0.

Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen, Mark Letorney, Melissa Manka, Benjamin Bornstein (6:45-7:17) and Diane Finnigan (7:17-7:38) were present.

G. Gebauer MOVED to exit executive session at 7:38 pm.

M. Letorney SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED: 3 – 0.

G. Gebauer MOVED to recommend the immediate hire of Diane Finnigan for the position of minute clerk at a rate of \$20 per hour using Planning Commission Special Project Funds for the remainder of the fiscal year and dedicated Planning Commission Minute Clerk Funds beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>.

M. Letorney SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED: 3 – 0.

### **Community Wastewater Project**

#### **Hydrogeologic Evaluation Report**

A. Macrellis of Stone Environmental Inc was present. She presented the hydrogeology report resulting from soil borings conducted in the Fall of 2021 as a part of the Step 2 CWSRF process. She noted that this study was necessary to confirm capacity and resulted in identifying more potential than the conservative initial calculations. The 2022 report will be used to update the initial 2017 analysis. She said the current analysis identified the layout/area of the system as a bigger limitation than the sites environmental limits (i.e. high ground water and/or ledge). She also noted that the report updates alternative four, includes an alternate 5 (drip irrigation), and updates capacity based on the verified conditions. A. Macrellis recommends submission of the document to VT Indirect Discharge Program, so they may update the preliminary capacity determination.

S. Jensen inquired about the conditions identified at the Jackson site versus the soils surrounding the Common.

A. Macrellis stated the borings conducted at the proposed leach field site identified nine plus feet of sandy soil before reaching groundwater and/or ledge. In contrast, she noted that the hand augers conducted sometime between 2013-2015 in the Common Area found soil depths to be six and twelve inches in depth before reaching ground water. She added that inground wastewater systems require at least five feet of suitable soils prior to reaching an environmental limitation and mound systems require at least twelve inches. However, the latter tend to be more expensive, require a lot of land and are challenging to maintain.

S. Jensen asked whether there are parcels in the Common Area in which a mound system is not feasible. A. Macrellis responded in the affirmative.

M. Letorney MOVED to accept and approve submission of the draft Hydrogeological Evaluation Report to VT IDP.

S. Jensen SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED: 3 – 0.

#### **Engineering Services Agreement**

Stone Environmental Inc. feels confident that they can lead the project from this point forward and plan to have a draft engineering services agreement for Commission review on 4/18.

#### **Revised Supplemental Preliminary Engineering Report**

M. Manka said she requested a few minor revisions based on the Commission's March review of the document. She noted that one additional revision is needed. Specifically, revising the number of control station tanks from 5 to 4 in the alternative four cost estimate. She asks that the Commission accept and approve submission of the document to VT Department of

Environmental Conservation.

S. Franz asked about the “plan B” wastewater plan. S. Jensen responded that the Town does not have a plan B, but what has been referenced are public comments referring to a plan B. S. Jensen wanted to point out that a minor change of use at the Common Hall from assembly only to assembly with catering requires a doubling of necessary capacity. If this is required change is necessary in order to make the building financially viable as some have stated then there is not any capacity to share with the town office, library and/or other community buildings to ensure their future use and/or meet their wastewater needs and requirements.

G. Gebauer MOVED to accept and approve submission of the draft Supplemental Preliminary Engineering Report to VT DEC as amended.

M. Letorney SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED: 3 – 0.

### **1705 Rte. 128 Property Project**

#### **Amended Scope of Work & Timeline**

M. Manka informed the Commission that the Selectboard approved the amended scope of work and budget for the additional public engagement meeting. The Commission can now announce the public engagement meeting planned for 4/27.

#### **Community Engagement Meeting & Public Outreach**

The Commission discussed the 4/27 meeting advertisement and website promotion postcard.

M. Letorney suggested the Commission move project information from the Town Website to a website dedicated to the project. He stated that all content on the current webpage could be transferred to the new website by the next day, if the Commission decides to go this direction. He feels it would be a more effective tool. M. Manka said she did not have time to dedicate to developing a new website prior to the advertisements needing to go out and/or the public meeting. M. Letorney said everything from the current website is on the new website. The only items that need to be added are the webinars. M Manka asked if the site used WordPress. M. Letorney said it did not, but he and his crew would do everything for the site. He added that as the project becomes more complex with parallel projects people will want a way to access that information. S. Jensen and G. Gebauer will default to whatever reduces M. Manka’s workload and keeps information accessible. M. Letorney and M. Manka will connect tomorrow to determine which website should be advertised.

C. Winfield mentioned that the town website is subpar and difficult to navigate.

M. Manka stated all webinar modules have been recorded, with the exception of module six as we need the to receive the revised conceptual plan and visual renderings in order to complete said webinar.

G. Gebauer offered to draft two FPF posts announcing the public engagement meeting, promoting the website and webinars, and giving a brief status update. The FPF posts should be released this week and perhaps a third will be ready for publishing the following week.

G. Gebauer said Eric Ford and Heather Armata agreed to be the zoom controllers and Pat Haller agreed to be the mic runner on 4/27. We still need a zoom participant to inform the zoom controller of any zoom issues during the meeting.

G. Gebauer then discussed the presentation outline. The order of the Commission's presentation may change. He noted that the partners should focus on who they are, what they do, and what they bring. S. Jensen felt residents should have some time to discuss mechanics with GMHFH and VRC. The Commission discussed timing and order. They agreed to give the Commission, partners, and mechanics questions the first hour and dedicate the final hour to SE Group, conceptual plans and public comments on the conceptual plans.

Everyone agreed it will be important for residents to watch the webinars in advance in order to be fully prepared for the public engagement meeting. M. Letorney will contact M. Manka regarding her suggested revisions to module two.

C. Winfield said the more information given in advance is great but asked what will be shared in the FPF posts such as design, green space, setbacks, etc. G. Gebauer responded that the modules will get into the details of the project and conceptual plan. It should be noted that the conceptual plan is a concept based on town feedback and nothing is finalized or set in stone. That said, we hope the webinars answer many resident questions prior to the meeting. S. Jensen asked residents to please submit their questions, concerns, etc. to the Commission rather than infer.

The Commission agreed the webinars are ready for publishing.

### **Route 128 Crosswalk**

S. Jensen would like VTrans to repaint the crosswalk in front of the Town Office. S. Jensen offered to draft a request to VTrans to repaint the crosswalk when the road lines are being repainted. M. Letorney offered to send the request to VTrans.

### **Planning Commission Rules of Procedure and Conflict of Interest Policy**

M. Manka said G. Lamphere made revisions based on discussions at the last Commission meeting and VLCT guidance on hybrid meetings. M. Manka stated that she recently received a public records request for a meeting recording which included an executive session, which is not open to the public. She contacted VLCT and the Town Attorney to determine proper actions. She informed the Commission that the executive session would need to be removed from the recording and the edited recording made available. M. Manka stated Robert Fletcher, Town Attorney, questioned why the Commission was recording meetings and recommended that the Commission not do so. G. Gebauer said he would like to better understand the Town Attorney's reasoning and discuss the matter at a forthcoming meeting when the entire Commission is present.

### **Minutes of the March 21, 2022 Meeting**

M. Letorney MOVED to approve the minutes.

S. Jensen SECONDED the motion.

The motion PASSED: 3 – 0.

B. Peck asked whether the Commission would share the Town Attorney's reasoning regarding why the Commission should not record meetings. G. Gebauer said he doesn't know at this time, but they will get more information from the attorney. He added that it is ultimately up to the Commission to accept or reject an attorney opinion.

### **2022 Work Plan**

The Planning Commission reviewed and revised the work plan as necessary.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:20 p.m.

Submitted by,

Melissa Manka, Westford Town Planner