

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR DECEMBER 19, 2022 MEETING
Approved on January 16, 2023**

Commissioners Present: George Lamphere, Seth Jensen, Mark Letorney, Gordon Gebauer, Mo Reilly

Commissioners Absent:

Also Present: Melissa Manka (Town Planner), Harmony Cism (Planning Assistant), Ben Bornstein (CCRPC), Barb Peck, Sheila Franz, Emily Hackett (VT DEC), Maureen Wilcox, Paul Birnholz, and Laurie Johnson

Meeting Began: 6:32pm

Amendments to Agenda

No amendments.

Minutes of the December 5, 2022 Meeting

S. Jensen MOTIONED to approve the minutes as presented.

M. Letorney SECONDED.

G. Lamphere abstained from voting due to his absence at 12/05/22 meeting.

The motion passed 4-0.

Meeting Rules of Procedure

G. Lamphere outlined the meeting rules of procedure for the public.

Citizens to be Heard - *Items not on agenda*

No comments.

Correspondence

No correspondence.

Community Wastewater Project

Local ARPA Request

M. Manka gave a brief update. At their 12/08/22 meeting, the SB reviewed the PC's Local ARPA Request for construction of the community wastewater system. The SB approved \$150,000 contingent on a positive bond vote. The PC's original request was about twice that number. Thank you to S. Jensen and M. Manka for working on this and securing another portion of the funding.

S. Jensen said that there has been a change in the Treasury Department Rules. A larger variety of requests became eligible for ARPA funding. The SB really deliberated and made a balanced decision. Thankfully, there are other funding sources that we can pursue.

Community Recovery & Revitalization Grant

Draft Application

M. Reilly circulated a draft application. It is a relatively straightforward application. The “meat” of the application is the impact that project may have; this is important to make the case for why it should be funded with APRA Community Recovery dollars. One action item to discuss is the letters of support and the process to request them. Another part of the application is the Project Navigator Project Summary Sheet. Emily Hackett said that the Project Summary Sheet should be part of the FONSI information, and she will check on this.

For the letters of support, M. Manka said that typically we contact different organizations and explain the funding source and request a letter of support. Sometimes we make the request and the organization drafts a letter, and sometimes we provide a template and ask the organization to take action on it. The PC will be looking for letters of support from the Town, the Regional Planning Commission, and the Regional Development Corporation. Letters of support should contain details about whether the proposed infrastructure improvements and projected development are compatible with the Town Plan and whether the project has clear local significance. M. Reilly will reach out to contacts at CCRPC and GBIC. S. Jensen said that the project is listed in high priority projects for GBIC. Ben Bornstein is working with CCRPC and will help work on drafting to move this forward. Letters of support that were used for the NBRC Grant can possibly be used as a template. The PC should bring the application and a prepared support template to the SB at same time.

The PC hopes to submit the application in mid-January. It would be helpful for all Commissioners to read the application. M. Manka will pull together a Town template for the SB.

Grant Writer Request

The SB approved the PC’s request to use up to \$2,000 of the Grant Writers’ Budget for this application. G. Lamphere noted that the SB expressed curiosity about why more Town organizations don’t leverage the Grant Writing Budget and capability.

Community Communications

S. Jensen & G. Gebauer had a brief discussion about periodically posting FAQs and links to the website.

M. Manka inquired if there should be a January newsletter and FPF Post to summarize Local ARPA end-of-year, where we come from, and plans for the future. This would be due 12/27/22. The PC agrees that a year-end summary for the wastewater project is a good idea. There is already a 1705 end-of-year update being submitted. This one would be just for WW. G. Gebauer suggested that the PC end this year with the 1705 update and begin the new year with information about the WW project in January’s newsletter.

Public Comment

Earlier in this meeting, Paul Birnholz had interjected with a question about Rules of Procedure. S. Jensen addressed this question by reading the following statement from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns: “There is no legal obligation for municipal public bodies to adopt Roberts’ Rules of Order for their meetings. In fact, Roberts’ Rules are not well-suited for small boards. VLCT has developed Model Rules of Procedure for meetings to help selectboards, committees, commissions, and other public bodies.”

Barb Peck asked for clarification about the Rules of Procedure and when changes were last adopted. G. Lamphere explained that the PC is conducting meetings as per the Rules of Procedure as updated in 2022. Page 5: “Public Participation #1-7” was covered at the opening of today’s meeting.

1705 Project

Community Communications

M. Manka presented the draft newsletter/FPF Post. She is requesting approval to submit this update on 12/27/22.

S. Jensen proposed adding a sentence or two about the tank removal. This would include a summary of information released in October concerning the 55 gallons of gas and water that were pumped. Remediation wasn't specifically part of the 1705 Project, but this was done concurrently. M. Manka suggested presenting all brownfield information in one summary and 1705 VDCP Project in another summary. G. Lamphere reiterated that these were separate efforts on a parallel timeline. Since the PC needs to approve this newsletter/post tonight, a paragraph on the brownfield is proposed for next month.

G. Gebauer MOVED to approve the 1705 Project update as written.

S. Jensen SECONDED the motion.

The motion passed 5-0.

VDCP Scope of Work Tasks & Timeline

On 12/07/22, M. Manka met with SE Group, KAS, and Button regarding completion of the VDCP scope of work. KAS and Button can complete their final tasks in spring/summer 2023 and M. Manka will close out the grant.

Brownfield Assessment & Remediation Summary Request

M. Manka spoke with Angela Emerson at LE Environmental. Angela stated that it will take her 2-3 hours to review and summarize all the assessments and remediation efforts. This will cost \$300-\$400. Special Project Fund dollars are available if approved. G. Lamphere wondered if this is an obligation and a good use of taxpayer dollars. If the PC takes a step to summarize reports, can it be done without leaving open questions or misinterpretations? It may be sufficient to have CCRPC review. M. Manka is inclined to have information for the public come from LE Environmental so we know it's correct. A shorter blurb may cost less. A paragraph or two is fair middle ground.

G. Lamphere MOVED approve up to \$300 from Special Project Funds to have LE Environmental provide a summary of the brownfield assessment and remediation.

S. Jensen SECONDED the motion.

G. Gebauer proposed that the dollar amount be reduced to \$200.

G. Lamphere MOTIONED to approve up to \$200 (less is appreciated) to have LE Environmental compile a summary of the brownfield assessment and remediation effort done at 1705.

S. Jensen SECONDED the motion.

The motion passed 5-0.

Public Comment

Barb Peck commented that she agrees with M. Manka. From public standpoint, if it's too wordy/complicated, the public won't understand. The paragraphs about the 1705 Project and the brownfield assessment should be kept separate. When using the phrase "closing out the grant," it needs to be made clear to public what that means. Short/concise/meaningful wording is better than confusing language. The PC will get less questions from the public with clear language.

December 14th Selectboard Meeting & Road Committee

At the 12/14/22 SB meeting, the SB discussed traffic around Town Center and traffic on Town roads, primarily Old Stage Road, Woods Hollow Road, and Cambridge Road; that these are pass-thru roads that

neighboring communities use on regular basis. There was discussion around WW and the impacts that it would have on Town Center. The SB's next step is to look at re-instituting a Road Committee. They are looking for interested community members that have expressed concern and interest to volunteer for this committee. There are no specifics yet on how many members or what the charter would look like. S. Jensen added that traditionally, the SB has done a Road Committee Report every 5 years. Should the PC have member on that commission? Typically the committee has included the Road Foreman, local residents, local engineers, and ANR river scientist- Stacy Pomeroy (water quality perspective). The SB appoints and oversees the Road Committee.

Quarterly FY '23 Financial Report

We are halfway through FY'23. The budget looks good. Special Project Funds allow \$2600 for remainder of year. Budget Line Items are well below budgeted amount. G. Lamphere would like information in meeting packets that can be shared with the public that doesn't mix in staff-related expenses. G. Lamphere and M. Manka will discuss which information is included in status updates.

2022 Work Plan

M. Manka has a list of things that need to get done and/or carry over to 2023. The list includes Facility Plan Update, Clean Water Reimbursements, Step 2 ESA & PCS, and the CRRP Grant Application.

There is no need to discuss the 1705 Project until spring/summer 2023 when things are wrapped up. It would be nice to finish up 1705 this year. M. Manka will try to get summary approved. In spring/summer 2023, the PC will have the final deliverables and can begin close out the grant. The PC is effectively closing out 1705 but some administrative tasks remain which will take some effort through 2023.

2023 Work Plan

M. Manka worked out a new format for the 2023 Work Plan.

The PC is not prepared for a special meeting on 1/5/23. We are still waiting for DEC documents. Once the DEC docs have been received, M. Manka will update the applications, check in with Tom Brown on financial aspects, and work to present information to the PC for review and approval to submit to the SB. The PC will need documents and the Facility Plan Update before the Step 2 application can be submitted. S. Jensen asked if the DEC is missing timelines and benchmarks. The PC was supposed to have the Facility Plan by the end of November, and will need it by the end of December to proceed and stay on track. The timeline on reimbursements is unknown. Amy & M. Manka finalized the Project Cost Summary and sent it to the DEC. Westford is ahead of everyone else. Emily Hacket had left Zoom by this point in the meeting, and it was difficult to have this conversation without her. It needs to be part of the agenda when right people are here. The DEC needs to communicate to the PC why things aren't continuing at the pace we were told they would. More time should be allotted in the agenda for the State to provide us with the status updates. Some questions from the public will be answered in this final engineering phase, but the PC needs refined numbers. Delays make it hard for us to be responsive to taxpayers. The PC expressed displeasure that the timelines are being missed.

The PC will not be prepared for a 1/5/23 meeting because we may not have the needed documents from the DEC by then. There is no time to put a packet together and warn the meeting due to M. Manka being on vacation the last week of December. The next SB memo will come out after the consultants have been contracted.

The PC will go before the SB at the 1/12/23 SB meeting. Updates for the SB will include notice that the PC is working on CRRP Grant and will be looking for a letter of support. The PC will need the SB to approve and sign #5 on the grant application and to sign the grant agreement if the grant is awarded. The SB will be informed that the PC supports the reinstitution of the Road Committee. There is no

requirement for a PC member to be part of the Road Committee, nor do we have a volunteer at this point. Depending on when the CRRP app is prepared and how long it takes Liz to review it, the application may not be ready until the 1/26/23 SB meeting.

The next PC meeting will be on 1/16/23 at 6:30pm. A special meeting can be called if/when needed, when the PC has received the necessary documents. We may need to have a discussion if we don't have the DEC docs by 1/16/23. The SB was clear that they don't want to push back the bond vote again. The DEC needs to work on meeting timelines. Their deadline is 12/31/22. M. Manka will contact the DEC this week and make this clear to them. The PC will consider a special meeting sometime in January if documents are received and action is needed.

Public Comment:

Ben Bornstein had an update about the ARPA project for the EMR (Emergency Medical Response) training for high school students. Ben received confirmation from Kathy Jochim, the director of the Fairfax Rescue Squad. Kathy is on board to be the certified instructor for this program at the Westford Library. Date and time TBA. This program is for high schoolers who are interested in learning CPR, AED, and EMR training with possible internships next summer with area rescue squads.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:10pm