

Westford Town Common Wastewater Project
Outreach Advisory Committee Meeting Wednesday, January 18, 2023
Approved: February 22, 2023
Attending:
Town Office: Mellissa Manka, Town Planner
Zoom:
Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen (phone), Planning Commission
Eric Ford, Pat Haller, Committee Members
Maureen Wilcox, Resident
Amy Macrellis, JB Hinds, consultants to the Town

1. Roll Call

Gordon Gebauer served as chair and called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM.

2. Amendments to the Agenda

Gordon asked to flip project committee title with project updates. Consensus approval.

3. Minutes of December

The minutes were discussed including a name, "owmarly," by which someone identified themselves on zoom at the meeting. Gordon, Seth, and Pat voted to approve the minutes without amendment.

4. Committee Name

There is consensus to rename the group "Wastewater Outreach Advisory Committee" (WOAC).

5. Project Updates

Phase 1 and the Facilities Plan are COMPLETE. The process to initiate engineering will be:

1. Town is reimbursed for Phase 1 work; this has been submitted by Melissa
2. Select Board signs Birchline and Stone contracts (at which time work is covered by the signed contracts) along with the CWSRF loan amendment
3. Package sent to state; State issues ELF authorizing funding
4. Package goes to Bond Bank for final authorization

6. Communications Plan

- a. Website

Eric sent the committee an update that there has been an uptick in traffic to the website.

- b. Town Newsletter

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Gordon noted that the newsletter text is due on Monday, January 23rd. The Committee had decided in the fall to provide language for the newsletter that IF the Facilities Plan had been approved, language would go in the newsletter due 1/23.

Seth suggested a paragraph about the facilities plan so that people know where the Town is in the process. A next paragraph would address the fact that we'll now be able to answer specific questions people have been asking, such as final costs, how drip dispersal works, and when outreach to property owners will happen. Pat asked if we could clarify what the Facilities Plan actually is – that it is not “the final plan” and many adjustments will happen.

The Facilities Plan letter states that ANR WID has reviewed PER, EID, and other related reports and that they agree, following review and consultation, that

- (1) The project qualifies for FNSI
- (2) Environmental conditions that exist in the project area have been identified and mitigation has been identified

Thus WID approves PER and EID as a completed “Facilities Plan” for the project, and you may proceed with the design process. This also confirms and continues the Town’s eligibility for CWSRF and other federal and state funding.

JB noted that this starts the genuine design work – it has not been fully designed but more estimated, so that a bond vote can be on the ‘real’ project. JB also noted that a facilities plan approval and a PER represents a foundational ‘check’ on the assumptions around population, economic activity to be served, projected design flows, and robustness of the technologies an applicant (in this case Westford) has suggested. She noted she is working with a community in another state whose PER has not been found to be realistic or reasonable, and thus is raising questions about whether the project should be eligible for design funding. Communication can emphasize that the Facilities Plan approval letter represents a fundamental endorsement by Vermont ANR that the basic engineering and planning assumptions are sound, allowing a system to be designed using these assumptions.

c. One page information sheet

Wendy Doane is working on a one page information sheet. The goal is to have it ready for PC review in February, possibly the PC meeting on 1/20. This would be available for distribution at some point in the spring. Eric noted that it’s essential not to provide “too much, too soon” given the probable November bond vote and the uncertainty around final project costs. A three-month lead time for information before the vote would put us in July/August. The big questions of course will not be answer-able until later after Stone has had the opportunity to work through many engineering issues.

Amy outlined that there will be survey crews and ledge probes out in the spring, as well as a new set of contacts with all property owners in the prospective service area. Amy and JB suggested some broader announcement a minimum of one week before service area property owners hear

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from Stone, or any crews are out in the field. Amy will be more able to discuss timing of that once Stone is formally under contract.

Eric stated that the one pager is useful to the extent it's essentially a static repeat of the website. Outreach about these initial steps (property owner contact, site visits, ledge probes, survey) will be a good topic for this group's February or even March meetings. The team will need to work as a group to update the overall outreach schedule and communications plan once Stone is formally under contract. Amy noted that one of her first tasks under contract is a master project schedule. That task will allow everyone on outreach to have a more focused dialogue on the specifics of the communications plan.

d. Select Board memo

There had been discussion of a memo on the wastewater ordinance. The group discussed and agreed to table that memo until a formal project schedule is discussed.

JB needs to send Eric the text from the wastewater timeline. Melissa suggested changing that to 'general seasons' based on state feedback. Melissa will send JB revisions and JB will get those into a text version for Eric.

7. Next meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday, February 22nd at 10 AM.

8. Citizens to Be Heard

No comments were added.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Juli Beth Hinds