

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR MARCH 20, 2023 MEETING
Approved on April 17, 2023**

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

Commissioners Absent: Mo Reilly

Also Present: Melissa Manka (Town Planner), Harmony Cism (Planning Assistant, Minute Clerk), Ben Bornstein (CCRPC rep), Barb Peck, Sheila Franz, Kim Guidry, Ira Allen, Laurie Johnson, Emily Hackett (CWSRF ARPA)

Meeting Began: 6:31pm

Amendments to Agenda

None.

Reorganization

Reorganization decisions will be put on the agenda for the next meeting. Currently, G. Lamphere is chair, G. Gebauer is vice chair, and M. Letorney is clerk. The PC will also confirm the meeting schedule and review the Rules of Procedure to see if revisions are necessary. Rules of Procedure are largely based on guidance from Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT). The PC is not aware of any new items added to the model ordinance. There have been some changes to open meeting law. M. Manka will review before the next meeting to make sure we are in keeping with those changes.

Minutes of the February 27, 2023 Meeting:

S. Jensen MOVED to approve the minutes as amended.

M. Letorney SECONDED the motion.

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:*

Ben Bornstein asked for a status update on the grant for State ARPA funds. This will be discussed later in the meeting when the PC discusses wastewater.

Correspondence

None.

Community Wastewater Project

Amended Step 2 CWSRF Application

M. Manka received word last week that the application has been processed and is out for ANR signatures. Once those signatures have been received we will get the ALF letter, which verifies that funding has been allocated to this project. Documents will then be submitted to the bond bank for approval. We received an additional \$125,000 in subsidy, which brings the total subsidy to \$269,000. Tom Brown said that he expects to have all the signatures this week.

The additional \$125K is loan forgiveness; it is wrapped into loan but won't need to be paid back. It is paid for through the Clean Water Program and State ARPA. We have 3 subsidies at this point. It makes sense for the funding to be presented as a whole for the community, but it could be broken down into steps for the PC. M. Manka will break down the funding stack to show subsidies. The anticipated/potential grant funding is close to the total project cost. The amount secured is greater than the total project cost before adding the contingencies. The PC extends a thank you to Melissa for working so hard on this.

State American Rescue Plan Act Grant (ARPA) Agreement

The PC received the revised grant agreement with comments from ANR. The PC discussed the comments and questions with Emily Hackett. The hope is to get this wrapped up and to the SB for their 4/6/23 meeting. M. Manka will forward the document to Amy and Peter.

Community Recovery & Revitalization Program (CRRP) Grant

The grant has been filed and the PC is waiting to hear back from the State. The State has begun the process of working some of these grant applications through the system. M. Manka was contacted by Angela Farrington. There was an issue with the portal. A number of towns submitted applications as if they were ACCD and will need to resubmit. Melissa will resubmit the application later this week. This will not affect us as far as timing is concerned. The board only meets once a month, and we will still be in the April meeting to review applications. So far they have spent \$10 million out of the available \$40 million.

Public Outreach

S. Jensen reported that they are getting organized for the next round of engineering. The committee is working on a letter to people in the service area about the topographical survey. They received a question from Andre Roy about details from the engineers and contractors. There was also a question about the project during power outages. These questions may warrant updated FAQs. G. Gebauer is working on creating language for the FAQs that will be discussed at the next outreach meeting and posted ASAP. The PC urges the community to keep these questions coming. They want to take the time to hear questions and respond.

As this is a public process, questions should be directed to a public body. Responding to suppositions on social media is not the appropriate way to engage. The PC discussed whether it would be better to provide a direct response to individuals or a general response on the website. It is important to be responsive to individuals but also to serve the public as a whole. There was discussion around the best practice involved with fielding questions. The PC doesn't want to create barriers to people asking questions. Members of the outreach committee can forward questions to the PC. The Outreach Committee is a formal committee, and they can forward any questions to the PC. M. Manka added that the Outreach Committee is meeting on Wednesday, and this is one item that will be touched on. The public should be aware of how to properly submit questions. The Outreach Committee may draft a response or a reminder on FPF and in the newsletter to come to a meeting or to direct questions to the PC. Questions will be collected and answered when information is gathered. Potentially, this info will then be added to the project website so that everyone can find the answer. Directing people to FAQs is appropriate if the question has already been answered. It is also important to understand that not everyone uses the internet as their primary way to get information. S. Jensen or G. Gebauer will respond to Mr. Roy and include responses to his questions in the FAQs when the information is gathered. Not all questions can be answered at this time, but information gaps are being filled.

Public Comment

None.

1705 Newsletter Submission and FPF Posting

Drafts of the new article have been reviewed by the Pigeon Family Trust.

M. Letorney MOVED to approve the article that was included in the meeting packet.

G. Gebauer SECONDED the motion.

The motion passed 4-0.

The next step is to submit the article to FPF and the newsletter. The newsletter deadline is 3/27/23. M. Manka will submit the article.

Town Common Area Stormwater Treatment Assessment

M. Manka included the amended scope of work that was approved by Regional Planning. The cost of services increased due to Town delays and consultant salary increases. Thus, the PC match has increased from \$4,000 to \$4,600. Hoyle and Tanner are planning to have a draft plan to the PC in April to be reviewed at a May meeting. They will attend the May meeting to answer questions. The PC will need adequate time to review the documents.

KAS needs to complete their scope of work for 1705 to close out the VDCP grant. The culvert and outfall are important components of remediation. It is necessary to address stormwater issues and pH contamination. KAS and Hoyle & Tanner are working on this.

S. Jensen MOVED to authorize an additional \$600 to match.

G. Gebauer SECONDED the motion.

The motion passed 4-0.

Quarterly Financial Report

M. Manka had the bookkeeper print out a report of the general fund budget for the PC and what has been spent to date in this fiscal year. There are questions about what should and shouldn't be included. The PC can opt to take out Planner and Planning Assistant salaries and ask for the Conservation Commission to be re-coded so it doesn't fall into PC budget report. It seems odd that the Conservation Commission's budget is included in the PC budget. Re-coding will have to be discussed with the Treasurer. G. Lamphere will speak with the Treasurer and discuss the response at the next meeting.

2023 Work Plan

At the 4/3/23 meeting, the PC will discuss WW updates, reorganization, and Rules of Procedure. Hopefully the State ARPA grant will be finalized and can be submitted to the SB for final review and possible action on 4/6/23. M. Manka will follow up with Emily this week to determine turnaround time.

At the 4/17/23 meeting, the PC will have a kickoff meeting with the consultant team to go over the timeline and ask questions. This meeting will help the PC set the work plan for coming months.

S. Jensen noted that survey work is part of the WW system. There has been discussion about the need for a topographic survey for the Town Office property. M. Manka discussed this with Amy. The survey for WW is not an entire Town Center survey, just the area where components are going. It wouldn't assist with municipal property. Lidar is accurate and will be sufficient for the Town Office property data. The Town doesn't want to pay to survey the same property twice, but it is ultimately up to the SB.

At the 5/1/23 meeting, the Outreach Committee hopes to have a draft communication plan prepared to present to the PC. There will also potentially be a meeting with Hoyle & Tanner so they can answer questions related to conceptual design for the Route 128 culvert.

The PC has several long-term items on the horizon. G. Lamphere wondered if they should be built into the longer-term work plan. M. Manka does not think that the PC is in a position to add new projects anytime in the near future. Depending on what happens with the Legislature, the PC might need to update regulations based on the outcome of the Legislative session.

Seth noted that there has been some discussion about the State housing bill. The language related to water and sewer areas specifically excludes areas served by a soil-based system with less than 100k gallons per day. Those specific provisions would not apply to Westford regardless of the bond vote because the minimum threshold is 4X the size of the capacity of the Jackson fields.

Adjourn: 8:22pm