

Westford Town Common Wastewater Project
Outreach Advisory Committee Meeting Wednesday, March 22, 2023
Approved: May 3, 2023

Attending:

Town Office: Melissa Manka, Town Planner

Zoom:

Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen, Planning Commission

Eric Ford, Pat Haller, Committee Members

Maureen Wilcox, Barb Peck, Laurie Johnson, Residents

Amy Macrellis, JB Hinds, consultants to the Town

1. Roll Call

Seth Jensen as chair called the meeting to order at 10:07 AM. No amendments were made to the agenda.

2. Minutes of February 2023

The thorough notes were appreciated. Gordon moved and Eric seconded approval of the January minutes. Motion approved.

3. Updates

The Amended Step II Clean Water Revolving Fund was signed by the Select Board and has been processed at the state. Today, it is awaiting signatures from the supervisors. The Authorization of Funding Letter then has to go to the Bond Bank. Melissa will call Tom Brown since no one on the consultant team has been paid for a year. An additional \$125,000 in subsidy (i.e., loan forgiveness) has been received.

The most recent State ARPA funding draft agreement has been received and was reviewed with Emily Hackett. It will go in front of the Select Board for their approval in April. The spend-down date is August 2026. Melissa asked Amy and Peter to perform a final review before the Select Board signs it.

The CRRP grant (Community Revitalization and Recovery Program) was submitted in February. Melissa understands there was some problem at ACCD with submittals, but Westford's position in the funding cycle is not affected.

Melissa noted that the [funding stack spreadsheet](#) has been updated and is in the packet. The ACCD Board meeting for the CRRP grant is in April; an award decision should be received by mid-May. Angela Farrington said all of the municipalities who have applied have received funding, and there is still \$30m left. JB noted that additional pollution abatement grant dollars could be awarded since the Town has more points, but as Amy notes, the State "doesn't actually say until they actually say."

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In terms of project activity, the next step is sending letters to the service area. Stone will be bringing a detailed set of steps to the project workshop in April. The Stone team will be developing its internal schedule for important items like ledge probes, drilling, and survey work. Survey work, for example, looks like it will be April/May unless there is more snow. Coordination with VTrans will start in the next two weeks. Amy noted that the surface water quality background evaluation has to start by June, which also requires a QA/QC plan be submitted to VT DEC by early May. Sampling will require the permission of a couple of property owners on the Browns River. Amy will let Melissa know which property owners need to be contacted. The sampling plan will be focused on water chemistry.

4. Draft Service Area Property Owner Letter

The [draft letter](#) to service area property owners is reviewed. Previously, GME had sent unfortunately drafted letters without notifying the town. Stone Environmental does have a record of who was willing to allow access, who had interest in connecting, who allowed basement access, and some of the issues encountered. Amy recommended multiple means of getting the word out. Some people did indicate a preference for email; they can be e-mailed. Additional versions of the letter are recommended since some people were not able to connect, some have had a visit and do not need additional survey, and everyone should be given an opportunity even if they did not allow permission last time.

Pat suggested a letter be sent sooner than later. He has had neighbors ask when they will be contacted. The first week of April is the most likely time that a letter to all property owners informing them of their options for survey and participation will be sent. At least one house has been up for auction; Melissa will double-check ownership on that property. The old Fay house also has changed hands. Pat will send information for another pair of property owners who may need a direct contact.

Members felt the letter is in good shape. Gordon noted that George Lamphere should review it prior to sending it out since it is his signature.

5. Public Communications and Standard Response

Melissa has put a standard response in the google drive. Seth offered a summary of the Planning Commission discussion of the issue. The PC feels that questions, even on Front Porch Forum, should be honored as if directly submitted to the Planning Commission; however, responses also need to follow a formal process. The [draft response](#) is intended to demonstrate that comments have been received and will be acted upon in a formal manner. The committee made edits to Melissa's draft and moved to discussion of when and how to use the text. JB suggested this be posted on Front Porch Forum ASAP and then when necessary. Eric suggested the top paragraph be added to any communications put out by the committee. The committee made a final edit of

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“late summer/early fall” so that people are not expecting final engineering answers before that is even feasible.

Seth noted that when his father was on Select Board, the saying was “If someone will ask it in the store but not on the floor, they may not want an answer to that question.” He noted it will be interesting to see what questions are asked “on the floor” in formal meetings, rather than on social media.

For the April newsletter and Front Porch Forum, the language in the standard post should be submitted to both. In addition, the April newsletter can note that letters or other contact are going out to residents in the prospective service area. JB will draft a post for the newsletter (which Melissa also can post on FPF the day of the newsletter). The post will note that potentially, there will be survey crews in the Town Common area before the next newsletter.

6. Project Website

Eric will post the new FAQs on the website as soon as the committee has signed off on these. Gordon is finishing new FAQs which when finished will be provided to the outreach members for their review. Some of the FAQs need Stone Environmental to review and provide responses. For the article in draft on soils behind the Westford Common Hall, Amy has provided information from Oakson’s website on how a drip dispersal system works. She noted that there is significantly less land disturbance and vibration with a drip system than other forms of soil-based dispersal. JB noted that there is increasing experience with drip dispersal. It’s essential to keep grease out of drip dispersal systems, which is more straightforward in a STEP system than gravity. A grease trap requirement in the ordinance will be essential to protect the function of the collection and dispersal systems.

JB will take the lead in turning the soil discussion into a scrollable presentation (i.e., powerpoint) format for the blog and for use in education. The committee agreed that Melissa should work with Eric to update the funding stack information on the website to reflect the current [expected grant amount](#). The cost is still TBD.

7. Future Meeting Schedule & Topics

The committee will discuss its meeting frequency at the April 18th communications working session, which will be a working session, and NOT a scheduled meeting where minutes will be taken. Pat is charged with bringing coffee, and Melissa, donuts. A meeting may be held the next morning on the zooms with minutes and action items.

JB and Amy will be meeting with the Common Hall on April 18th in the evening.

8. Citizens to Be Heard

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Barb Peck said it's really good that the committee wants to provide information to the public. She disagrees with members' characterization of Front Porch Forum.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Juli Beth Hinds". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Juli Beth Hinds