

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR JUNE 5, 2023 MEETING
Approved on June 19, 2023**

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

Commissioners Absent:

Also Present: Lee McClenny (Selectboard), Bill Cleary (Selectboard), Dave Baczewski (Selectboard), Nanette Rogers (Town Administrator), Melissa Manka (Town Planner), Harmony Cism (Planning Assistant & Minute Clerk), Suzanne Kearns (Common Committee), Lori Johnson (Common Committee), Caroline Brown (Common Committee), Louise Jensen, Sai Sarepalli (CCRPC), Jon Olin (Hoyle & Tanner), Kirsten Worden (Hoyle & Tanner), Barb Peck, Sheila Franz, Ben Bornstein, Kim Guidrey, Ira Allen, George Pigeon

Meeting Began: 6:30pm

Amendments to Agenda

Minutes of the May 15, 2023 Meeting

G. Gebauer MOVED to approve the minutes as amended.

M. Letorney SECONDED the motion.

The motion passed 5-0.

Meeting Rules of Procedure

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

Town Common Area Stormwater

Conceptual Plans

Thanks to Hoyle & Tanner and their representatives for being at this meeting. This is a proposed conceptual design plan that is required to close out the UPWP Grant. This plan captures what exists today and what could be improved upon. This includes the culvert under Route 128 that discharges into Brown's River. This discharge causes erosion and water quality concerns. The conceptual design plan covers specific areas of concern and is likely to evolve over time. The PC will review and discuss this plan. *This is not a construction or implementation plan.* This plan will be used as baseline when seeking future grant opportunities to make improvements. Town center stormwater management is an open issue that must be adequately addressed and will continue to be discussed at future PC meetings.

Jon Olin provided a summary overview: Fitzgerald Environmental conducted a study years ago that pointed out some of the stormwater issues around the Town Common. Hoyle and Tanner began their project in July 2021. The project focuses on specific issues that need attention, specifically the existing underdrain system in the Common. A pipe under Route 128 crosses the property at 1705 Route 128, and outlets into a tributary of Brown's River. The pipe under Route 128 is corroded and in failing condition, which creates an infrastructure issue that needs to be addressed. Hoyle & Tanner assessed hydrology and hydraulics in the stormwater system. The existing underdrain system is likely plugged in several places and is not functioning. The catch basins on Route 128 are directly connected to the underdrain system and likely bring debris from the road through the smaller pipes under the Common. The proposed

stormwater upgrades look to address ponding within the Common and along Route 128 and erosion at the outlet site. They also seek to provide treatment before the stormwater reaches Brown's River.

Kirsten Worden introduced Hoyle & Tanner's proposed plan, which is to install a closed pipe system around the perimeter of the Common that will connect with two catch basins on the east side. This would bring the flow to the north and into an underground chamber system that will filter stormwater through a sand layer to provide water quality benefit. The underdrains would then outlet through a new line across Route 128. The outlet would include a plunge pool to dissipate energy and combat erosion. This design has been coordinated with proposed development in this area. The drainage area to the underground chambers is 2.77 acres, with a 3-acre area to the outfall. The impervious area to the chambers is 0.44 acres. The water quality volume to be treated is .044 acres/foot. Stormwater treatment would be provided prior to the flow going to the outfall. The second component of the design is to replace the underdrain system with new 6" and 8" underdrains. The existing system would be abandoned in place. The proposed system is a closed collection system that would not get clogged with debris. Stone and geofabric around the underdrains will act as its own filtration treatment. Relaying outfall at a shallow depth lets us decrease velocity. The original system was a very steep drop. The proposed system would decrease velocity at the 100-year storm to 4.8 feet/sec, minimizing velocity through the pipe.

M. Letorney asked about the sand treatment component. What retains the sand and what is the life expectancy of a sand filtration system? Kirsten explained that there is a choker layer between the sand and gravel consisting of 3 inches of pea stone. There is also geofabric all around the chambers. The system is put down in layers. The chambers will require some maintenance in the form of cleanout through observation ports where a Vactor truck can connect. The design incorporates deep sumps in the catch basins that would collect rocks and heavy debris. An isolator row would trap everything that gets through the closed pipe system. M. Letorney asked if there is any further treatment or flow mitigation after the plunge pool. Jon answered no, the stream should naturalize itself after these corrections are made.

S. Jensen observed that the culvert seems to be the most pressing issue. He asked how much of this plan would have to happen in order for the culvert to be replaced, and what could be done as a future phase. Jon agreed that from a structural perspective, the worst issue is the existing 18" pipe that goes under Route 128, which is in horrific condition, and also the outfall and erosion on the 1705 property. "Structure G" is the proposed new 30" culvert under Route 128. This drainage ties into the old system, and just replacing the culvert wouldn't fix the issues on the Common or further down Route 128. S. Jensen commented that from a funding standpoint it may make sense to do more than just replace the section from the common to the outflow on the 1705 property. In an emergency situation where the culvert fails, just that section could be done. Action would be dependent on local funding priorities and funding sources. Kirsten explained that the existing culvert is 18", and the proposed new culvert is 30" in diameter because more water is entering. The flow to the outfall at the 100-year flow is 16.87 cubic feet/sec. This is designed for higher flow. A lot of the existing catch basins and underdrains are clogged, so the old system is not getting water. This plan looks to redirect, capture, and treat more stormwater. S. Jensen then asked if this plan would help the Town meet the Municipal Roads General Permit in any way. Jon replied that since Route 128 is a state highway, it is worth continuing the discussion with VTrans. This is town-owned infrastructure within a state highway right-of-way. Kirsten clarified that this system would be used purely as a filtration system, and flow would not infiltrate into the Town Common. The surface would still look just like it does today.

M. Manka asked if we have the ability to break out the cost estimate based on the phasing. Kirsten calculated the cost estimate for the underdrains in the Common vs. the rest of project. The total for just

the underdrains is \$136,000, which includes 20% contingency. The total for the entire project is \$578,000. The total for all stormwater treatment practice, including catch basins, pipes, chambers, culvert, outfall, and plunge pool comes to \$442,000.

G. Lamphere asked if the catch basins would be town-owned, or if there would be any benefit to asking the State to take this on. If they were town-owned, it would result in O&M cost for cleanouts and maintenance. M. Manka replied that she has met with the State to speak about O&M. The State has no permits on file for the current system, which means they have no responsibility. Moving forward, we would want to have a memorandum of understanding. The State would be willing to maintain the infrastructure in the ROW. There needs to be a clear distinction of State vs. Town responsibility.

S. Jensen asked if there is any documentation. Hoyle & Tanner replied that there is a meeting summary, and they can provide a written summary. S. Jensen also asked if the proposed sumps are larger, with more space to collect material. Hoyle & Tanner responded yes, and that any existing sumps are full and non-functioning.

L. McClenny noted that a concrete sidewalk is mentioned in the plan? He confirmed that this is based on the plans for proposed development in the Town Common area which included a sidewalk.

Public Comment

Lori Johnson asked how the system would be accessed for maintenance. Hoyle & Tanner replied that there are access ports at either end of the chambers that would be used for visual inspection. This is where a Vactor truck hose could connect to suck out debris. An access port is a 24" PVC riser with a cover.

Barb Peck asked how we maintain the catch basins now vs. how they will be maintained in the future, and who does the maintenance. G. Lamphere replied that nobody is maintaining them at present. The future plan has been discussed in the case that a new system is constructed. There is no willingness by the Town or the State to maintain what is currently there. S. Jensen added that it is often easier to get VTrans to maintain a new system. If something new were to be implemented, there would be an objective to clearly define roles and responsibilities.

George Pigeon expressed concerns about the culvert running through the 1705 property. The existing culvert has created damage in the form of erosion and restricted use of the property. He inquired about alternative routing of the culvert. Mr. Pigeon asked about the possibility of having the culvert run diagonally across Route 128 and down Cambridge Road into the river or along the property line between 1705 and Ira Allen's property, instead of the current property infringement. Hoyle & Tanner replied that redirecting the culvert may cause problems elsewhere. There is an existing tributary stream in place. Mr. Pigeon commented that without the culvert and drainage, there would be no stream. It is not a natural stream, just drainage from 128 or out of the culvert. Hoyle & Tanner replied that engineers have not looked at other locations, and that would be a challenge in acquiring permits, roadway agreements, and easements. M. Manka stated that they originally had discussed other alternatives, but there really aren't any. It makes sense to improve the existing location vs. finding a whole new location. The PC acknowledged that George Pigeon has valid concerns that the location of the culvert limits use of the property. The pros and cons should continue to be weighed. The downstream impact of erosion would be alleviated by the plans to reduce velocity and stabilize the bank. Mr. Pigeon's concerns should be noted for the next phase of the design. The proposed design plan doesn't increase the impact on the property, but it may be beneficial to consider moving the culvert closer to the property line for the sake of future use of the property.

Ira Allen asked if maintenance on the existing catch basin would change anything. G. Lamphere replied that the current culvert is corroded, degraded, and not functioning properly. Runoff into Brown's River contains sediment and degrades water quality. The existing catch basins are clogged and drainage under the Common is not functioning. This requires replacement, as it is not fixable. Stormwater issues start on Brookside Road and Route 128, and the water settles at ice rink, which is the lowest point on the Common. This is all an attempt to mitigate that. The PC doesn't currently have funding for a feasibility study.

Suzanne Kearns commented that the PC needs to consider George Pigeon's comments. The town is assuming that they can continue to use private property. Cambridge Road has a 4-rod right-of-way but does not have much room due to the location of the hotel building and the bridges. Water coming off Brookside Road creates issues on the upper Common and at the library, which has had significant flooding issues.

This project aimed to identify what could be done and get feedback. There is currently no project happening, and no funding for such a project.

Community Wastewater Project

May 31st SB Meeting

G. Lamphere reported that the PC had a productive meeting with the SB last week and appreciates their involvement. We have begun to chart a path and identify things to accomplish. All are in agreement that the objective is to provide the most informed bond vote. It is not the PC's job to say yes or no, they are focused on getting accurate and complete information to voters.

The Sb has a placeholder on the 6/8/23 agenda for the PC to present information. If the SB needs to make a decision, they will need ample time. The meetings must be warned with complete transparency. The PC intends to provide answers to some of the questions from the list of 18 questions. They will also present a revised Master Schedule Summary based on feedback.

M. Manka reported that she received the SRF agreement from the bond bank today. It has been forwarded to the SB to sign off on. This agreement is for \$125K in SRF subsidy. The project engineers will be paid through SRF subsidy and State ARPA agreement. This will cover Step 2 in its entirety.

S. Jensen noted that the PC has begun addressing the list of questions. There is a subset of questions related to policy decisions that the PC may be able to provide advice on, and that will ultimately be a SB decision. Some of the questions are informational, and the PC can work on answering them. Other questions are related to policy and ordinance, and the PC and SB must work together on these questions. L. McClenny stated that the SB would appreciate as much time for consideration of these documents before decisions have to be made. A document needs explanation before signing and needs to be discussed for transparency. For debate and discussion, the SB needs guidance from the PC. Items that are ordinance-related should have options laid out to be discussed openly in a SB meeting. The SB will continue to make time in their agenda.

The PC would like to get 3-4 questions to the SB for their next meeting. These questions will not require a decision but will likely require further thought and consultation. The PC can make recommendations. The PC will focus on informational questions for the meeting on 6/8/23. The PC can commit to answering questions about funding stack and estimated O&M costs.

D. Baczewski noted that the decision items will be the most challenging. The PC and SB need to look at how to frame information and avoid last-minute information. The SB appreciates the direction we are going.

The PC recognizes that it is important to get the topics out to the SB in front of the community and openly lay out options. Hearing the public is useful to find the solution that Westford wants. There is not one perfect answer.

Draft Master Schedule

The PC has gotten good feedback from the SB on the Master Schedule Summary and made some formatting updates. It will be helpful to watch the dates change and % complete fill in. The PC will submit this document for further comment and feedback.

State Agreements

The SB has signed the State ARPA agreement, the Town Administrator has submitted via DocuSign, and the PC is waiting for State signatures. The PC has received the Clean Water SRF Agreement which will be placed on a future SB agenda for signature.

Funding Stack

No changes since the last meeting. Awards will hopefully be announced in June.

Communication and Project Schedules

No changes since the last meeting.

B. Cleary asked if the loan is a forgivable loan. M. Manka responded that an excess of \$750,000 in funding will require a single audit, which will take place well into construction. The PCS shows the cost of 2 single audits covered by grant funding. The project won't trigger a single audit until construction.

CCRPC Traffic Volume and Speed Data Collection

L. McClenny, G. Lamphere, and N. Rogers met with Eleni Churchill at CCRPC. The discussion was focused on speed and safety, including pass-through traffic from neighboring towns on the north/south routes of Cambridge Road, Old Stage Road, Woods Hollow Road, and Brookside Road, specifically the intersections at Phelps Road and Maple Tree Lane. The 2020 study that took place during the pandemic is not a good baseline. CCRPC will gather volume and speed data into the spring of 2024 to establish a baseline. They are also looking to gather crash and ticket data as part of this effort. CCRPC will not be providing a traffic study or transportation plan, this is just volume and speed data. L. McClenny added that this will be a basic set of data, and it is just not possible to identify pass-through traffic. This will be done at no cost to the town.

Omission of Conservation Commission Budget from Planning Commission Budget Report

The treasurer is looking at removing this item. The PC hopes for a definitive response at the next meeting. It makes sense to move it, and this is the best time to do it.

Citizens to be Heard – *Items not on Agenda*

None.

Correspondence

The PC has received 3 items of correspondence.

Lori Johnson shared information about the new housing bill. The Town Planner is working with VT Planners Association (VPA) and Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) to understand what this bill means to towns like ours. We may or may not have to make adjustments to the zoning regulations. This will be added to the work plan and addressed when the PC receives feedback. The PC needs to gather information from regional planners, state planners, and VLCT before assessing and making any decisions. This will take place in a public meeting with public comment contributing to the decision-making process.

Maureen Wilcox sent an email to the PC asking where drip systems are operating in New England. The PC is working with consultants to identify where other systems are being used. They will follow up on this and hope to have a response at the next meeting.

Vicky Ross sent correspondence asking about potable water at the Town Office. She asked if the PC or some other entity should make a statement. She has been directed to the SB, who is responsible for assessing and monitoring.

2023 Work Plan

6/19/23: Consultants and ANR will hopefully be present at this meeting. There will be a funding update. There may be a CRRP award announcement. The PC will go over the updated Project Schedule, Communication Plan, and action item list. The PC will also discuss the process for making policy and ordinance decisions, with options and recommendations for the SB to review. The quarterly financial report will be reviewed. There will be discussion of schedules/action items.

The conceptual stormwater plan is on the future projects list. The town is not actively pursuing this project at this time. The PC can continue to look for funding, as this problem is not getting better. They should expand research into pipe placement. There is no formal agreement between the landowner and the Town. The PC should explore the best options to ensure preservation and usefulness to the community. More work is warranted. Stone Environmental is working with Hoyle & Tanner. The culvert is the most pressing issue. A plan for emergency solution makes sense. The topic of securing funding for an alternative study will be on the work plan for late Nov/early Dec.

G. Lamphere will be absent from the July 3 meeting, and possibly the July 17 meeting. He will coordinate with M. Reilly (Vice Chair).

Executive Session

G. Lamphere MOVED to enter Executive Session.

M. Reilly SECONDED the motion.

The motion passed 5-0.

Executive Session ended and meeting adjourned: 9:55pm