

Meeting Notes, Outreach Advisory Committee mtg, Monday, August 28, 2023
Approved September 5, 2023

Seth called to order the meeting at 1:03pm.

Present: Pat Haller, Gordon Gebauer, Eric Ford, Seth Jenson, Amy Macrellis, Peter Lazorchak, JB Hinds, Melissa Manka.

Absent: N/A

No other citizens participated.

Amendments to Agenda

There were no suggested amendments.

Correspondence

Wendy Doane gave Melissa Manka a vase of flowers and thanked her for her work, including on the Outreach Committee. No other external communications

Draft Minutes of August 8, 2023

Pat suggested a small clerical change, Melissa corrected. Pat Motioned to accept minutes as amended. Seth Seconded. Passed unanimously.

Project Updates

Technical work

Amy provided the technical updates.

As of 8/24, the 30% design plans and the project and estimated O&M costs have been published and provided to the Planning Commission and Selectboard. Emily Hackett of VT DEC is going to coordinate with the State's Indirect Discharge Program personnel to ask for and summarize responses/questions to Stone Environmental. Stone Environmental will schedule a 30% design review meeting in the near future.

Funding

Per Melissa, The CCRPC grant has been officially awarded and Melissa has asked for some key potential business and civic building users to respond to a CCRPC question regarding ability to pay staff a fair wage for any staff that might be employed due to the expansion in services the system could afford.

Cost Update

JB shared the results of a new cost spreadsheet that takes into account the

- a. projected \$400,000 bond vote estimate
- b. the O&M Costs presented to the Selectboard
- c. the decision by the Selectboard that the Town will pay for 100% of unallocated capacity
- d. the decision by the Selectboard that the two Civic Buildings (Red Brick Meeting House and Westford Common Hall) will be responsible for finding means to pay for their own user fees and

thus their allocation is not necessary to include in the projected Town's bond debt service and O&M costs.

The USER O&M cost first year (2026) will be approximately \$71.52 for a single-family home, or \$858 a year. A 2-bedroom apartment would be \$600 a year and a 1 Bedroom at \$300 per year.

The Bond amount equates to adding 90 cents on the overall tax rate, thus for \$300,000 valued property, the annual cost is approximately \$70. At this estimated \$70 for a \$300,000, the average USER will have a cost of around \$90 per month including O&M and town bonded debt service.

JB then represented what a 15 yr. home equity loan for a \$35,000 system might be. At a lower than prevailing equity loan rate of 8%, the loan payment would be \$334 a month compared to the projected \$71.52 per month system User O&M cost.

JB stated that these numbers are based upon the existing mix of interested users. Costs would go down as more users connect. Seth and Pat both stated that some of the service territory property owners that have said they're not interested in connecting might end up changing their minds if the bond vote passes as the public atmosphere of showing support at this time might not be perceived as being in their present best interest.

Melissa talked this morning with the proprietors of the Westford Country Store, and they are projecting they see a need for a future 30 seat wastewater capacity. JB modified her spreadsheet from 50 seats to 30, resulting in the Store portion having an O&M cost of \$2,837.

JB said the Town's total bond and O&M cost/year is at around \$65,000 and asked what fraction of the overall budget is that? Eric Ford responded it'd be around 2.58% and JB said that's a very small amount for the utility it's providing.

Eric asked if we knew the final bond numbers were available yet. Gordon said that he thinks Melissa, JB, and Amy were to work on the amount needed to be borrowed. The funding stack is larger than the total estimated cost, but with the multiple grants there are grant limitations and cost share requirements that need to be worked out to maximize use of the grant funds, minimizing the Town's bond obligation. Melissa said she's emailed Lynnette and Emily at the State to enlist their help but has not yet heard back. Melissa, Amy, and JB need to work with them to figure this out.

Print and Media

Because Gordon needs to leave at 2pm, we agreed to discuss Print and Media later in the agenda.

Service Area Meeting

Seth asked Gordon about the Aug 30th presentation's plan. Gordon said that because this was already done 2 years ago and a lot of information is known by the residents, reviewing too much of why a solution is needed isn't that much in question any more than thus won't cover it as in depth as the past. The meeting will have snacks for the participants. The meeting will go something like Introduction of himself, then introduction of the engineering team and consultant. JB won't be there, but Peter and

Amy will be there. Then an overview of the renewed numbers, then a review of the plans and then an open discussion. Amy suggested that some ground rules should be made in the beginning of the meeting to enable a successful outcome which is to allow potential users to ask questions specific to their connection. Seth concurred and suggested that the rules should not allow audience members to go off track opinions of the merits of the proposed system or the validity of the facts and figures presented. We agreed that there may be residents attending that are not potential users and we need to keep the guidrails in place to focus the meeting on the potential users and not others.

Amy suggested, and we all agreed that a simple handout and a single set of large plans should be all that is needed for this meeting. Amy's interest in having 1 set of plans is to allow the potential users to have discussions with them and provide the engineers the opportunity to mark up the documents in real-time based upon their input. Amy also said that we should keep this one very informal, have a simple handout and don't including the video or a Power Point. This will make the users the focal point and make the "milling about" time between users and the engineering team as strong and engaging as possible.

JB will create a simple one-page handout. Gordon asked that anyone he's asked for information to support the 30th meeting to please email that information to him.

Regarding attendance to avoid a quorum at the meeting Pat said he and Seth discussed which one of them will be present and that unless others disagree, Seth will be present, and Pat will not be. No one disagreed.

The meeting is at 5:30pm inside the RBMH. Melissa will try to be there at 4:30pm to start setting up. Seth will try to be there then too but has a 2:30 Lamoille County mtg that could delay him a bit but doesn't expect it.

Gordon left the meeting at 2:00pm.

Public Informational Meetings

Eric Ford provided the updates. The Post Cards with the public meeting dates and site walks was mailed out and posters exhibiting the September dates are up. The Town office and Library have extra post cards too.

Local Access TV folks are on-board, and the same general running of the meeting as last time is what he's thinking. We had one person logged running the presentation, one logged on to the Zoom to keep on top of any questions, and another person to run the microphone for the in-school participants. Pat realized that he was going to be out of town for a conference that had just come up. Melissa is going to ask Harmony to help, and we'll need to think of whom else to ask.

Material, Pamphlet:

Eric is working directly with the design team for the pamphlet hand-out. All but the costs are generally ironed out. We discussed the difficulty of not having costs vs the actual physical publishing of the

pamphlet in time of the Sept 13 public meeting. We all concluded that because it's 100% up to the Selectboard to decide on the bond amount, and they likely won't be able to provide input to that number until a special meeting tentatively scheduled for September 7, that the best that we can do is get the final number to the publisher on the 8th. The number would then be added to the pamphlet and then printed either by ourselves or possibly by a local print shop, like Village Copies to have it to us by Sept 11.

Video: Eric has created the 2–3-minute video. It's a YouTube video, which allows multiple advantages over other means of storing. The outreach team has seen it and Eric submitted it to the PC for their approval. It's going to be added to the Westfordsfuture.com website and included in FPF posts that we might provide in the future. Eric said that Marcus Pante did a great job and gave more effort and material than you could imagine. He's putting Marcus in the credits. Pat said he suspects Marcus would appreciate that much.

Social Media: Eric has included the video on Facebook and suggested that we use the Facebook service that can target Westford members. We agreed.

Amy Macrellis brought up that our meetings, the one on Sept 13, Oct 18, and the SB's warned meeting in November should all be nearly the same, not building upon each other. We don't want people who miss one of them to have missed important information. We agreed that that is a goal and a good reminder.

JB offered to help Eric with any prep of materials needed. Eric accepted but didn't have anything top of mind to ask for help with yet.

Seth asked who is creating the slide deck for the Sept 13&Oct 18 meeting. JB is charged with doing so and she'll work with Gordon. Eric said that he sees the Video to be the first thing of the presentation. A video link will be added into the power point presentation to allow for this to work seamlessly.

Communication Schedule

We didn't review the schedule.

Outreach Meeting Schedule

Next meeting scheduled for Sept 5th, 2pm via Zoom.

Citizens to be Heard.

There were no other citizens present.

Adjourned at 2:31pm

