

Attending:

Zoom: Melissa Manka, Town Planner; Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen, Planning Commission; Eric Ford, Pat Haller, Committee Members; Amy Macrellis, JB Hinds, consultants to the Town
Public:

1. Roll Call & Amendments to the Agenda

Gordon called the meeting to order at 10:10 AM.

2. Minutes of September 20, 2023

Pat moved and Eric seconded approval of the minutes as submitted. Motion carried.

3. Correspondence

The key correspondence was from David Whitney, a Westford Resident who has worked as an engineer. Amy has been in contact with Bruce Douglas, supervisor of the soil-based wastewater systems (small and indirect discharge) for the State of Vermont. Bruce has spoken directly to Dave, doing so very soon after Dave's front porch forum posts. Bruce had noted to Amy and JB that David's concerns appear to be with the Vermont Indirect Discharge Rules themselves, rather than the Maple Shade disposal system. Bruce will forward information to Rob from Oakson for his and the project team's information and use at the meeting on the 18th, which David Whitney will not be attending. Bruce will be providing a written response that will be communicated to the Town and to David.

The group agreed that Pat will suggest to Dave Whitney that, since he has talked directly with Bruce Douglas, he send any further questions to the Planning Commission or as them during the October 18th meeting. Seth noted that we are at the point where lengthy answers are not supportable; the drip dispersal system (1) removes the waste stream from proximity to wells and provides much greater separation to groundwater; (2) there is evidence drip dispersal provides much greater pollutant removal than conventional on-site systems where loading is not controlled; and (3) provides the opportunity for monitoring at the dispersal field, which does not exist today.

4. Project Updates

Site Walk: Six people attended the site walk on the North Road. None of the attendees were people who have expressed concerns on Front Porch Forum or proposed service area residents; the Select Board did not attend. RJ did a great job of answering questions. It was well received. Seth noted that one resident who lived near the field offered to discuss her experience as someone adjacent to the field.

Technical updates: Amy reported that Stone has been making minor changes to design plans based on input from residents in the project area. The Indirect Discharge Program has provided minor but important direction on the 30% design plans. A design review meeting with the State for the 30% plans will be scheduled soon. Melissa asked how Stone had been contacted regarding the residential service changes; essentially, every time Stone has been in the community with plans, someone has had a note or change that should be made. Melissa has not had anyone provide comments to her that need to be relayed.

Energy use: Pat relayed a question from Ira Allen: Since there will not be a pump station on the common, will the energy cost to residents be higher than it would have been with the pump station? Pat, Amy, and Peter looked at it; the short answer is that there is a negligible extra energy impact on individual residents. Pat calculated \$54-\$70/year of electrical cost for operating the pumps, based on conservative assumptions around the small (300-700 watt) pumps running 24 minutes/day. Amy noted that this is very similar to what would be experienced with a mound system, though potentially much lower than the energy demand with some advanced onsite treatment systems (like an Advantex) that has more recirculation and pumping involved.

Ordinance: The ordinance has been reviewed by the Town Attorney, sent back for corrections, sent back to the team, and sent to the Select Board for the meeting tomorrow (Thursday 10/12). Once the Select Board has seen these the group agreed the draft ordinance and summary should be posted on the website.

5. Print and Media

The direct mailing of the postcard is going today. For those with non-Westford mailing addresses, Tina from the library and Melissa have identified addresses and are finalizing the mailing today.

Tina is redacting any information on the store from the last roughly 100 and will have them available on the 18th.

Melissa will do a front porch forum post for the meeting on the 18th.

Ballots must be made available starting on the 18th. As far as when ballots are sent for voting by mail, Callie is working on labels today to mail before the 18th. Melissa will check in with her.

Gordon is meeting Melissa Clooney from WCAX next Monday morning at the Town Offices to respond to her interest in the project.

6. October 18th public informational meeting

The group discussed the meeting on October 18th.

- Eric and Pat will work on the zoom.
- Seth has to be in two meetings in Wolcott on the 18th and won't be attending.
- Melissa will be the mic runner.
- The slide deck and presenters should be the same, as well as the handout. JB will update the date on the handout noting it's the same information, and will send it to Melissa.

Pat suggested asking for a show of hands of how many people attended the September 13th meeting, noting that people who have not previously attended should do so.

Regarding the ordinance, since the Select Board has taken action since September 13th, the group decided that the Executive Summary should be made available as a hard copy at the meeting. The discussion can state that the Select Board has formally made the decisions that were recommended since the last meeting; the slide deck should not change other than the date. JB will update the slide deck with the change of date and get it to Melissa.

Regarding time, the team discussed the need for a clear statement that the meeting must be concluded because of the time constraints on school custodial staff and Lake Champlain Access staff; moreover, there are many other ways to ask questions and gain information. It was also noted that there should be a clear statement that when questions have truly been answered already, this will be noted. There were other suggestions from the Planning Commission to try to reduce the time of the presentation, or constrain questions. Questions also can be placed on the large stickies around the room.

Regarding the zoom chat: It has been recommended that the chat function be disabled, so that questions must be asked by participants and "side discussions" do not overwhelm actual questions that people are asking. The group discussed the issue; Eric noted that it was not difficult to manage. The chat log was made available and checked carefully to ensure questions were responded to. Amy recommended that the chat log be made available and any questions not answered would be addressed. The group agreed. The Select Board will make its own decision on how to handle the chat for the public hearing on November 1st. Eric stated that they'll be sure to emphasize people can raise hands or use chat to ask questions.

7. Offer of Assistance for Nov 1 meeting

The Select Board has stated that the Planning Commission will have the opportunity to "explain the project" after the public hearing is opened. Melissa has asked the Select Board for clarification on what the presentation should be. Melissa has informed the Select Board as to who is available; she will follow up with the Select Board to try to understand specifically what they would like to have happen and who they would like to have present.

8. Communication Schedule

There have not been any changes to the communication schedule.

9. Outreach Meeting Schedule

No meetings planned.

10. Citizens to Be Heard

No citizens attended the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 PM

Respectfully Submitted,



Juli Beth Hinds

draft