

**TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 23, 2023 MEETING
Approved on November 6, 2023**

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

Commissioners Absent: None

Also Present: Melissa Manka (Town Planner), Harmony Cism (Planning Assistant, Minute Clerk), Sheila Franz, Kim Guidrey, Lori Johnson, Barb Peck, Maureen Wilcox

Meeting Began: 6:32pm

Amendments to Agenda: None

Minutes of the September 5, 2023 Meeting

G. Gebauer MOVED to approve the minutes as presented.

S. Jensen SECONDED the motion.

The motion passed 3-0.

Minutes of the October 2, 2023 Meeting

M. Reilly MOVED to approve the minutes as presented.

G. Lamphere SECONDED the motion.

The motion passed 5-0.

Citizens to be heard

Barb Peck had a question about a postcard that was bulk mailed to Westford residents. These postcards used pictures and wording that has been used by the PC in the past and were sent by a group called "Uplift Westford" with a return address of PO Box 144. The PC is not aware of this postcard or who sent it out. S. Jensen received the postcard but doesn't know the affiliation. This appears to be an exercise of 1st amendment rights.

Community WW Project

- **Action Item List**

G. Lamphere did not receive any updates. He will reach out this week and work on an update.

- **Selectboard Schedule**

M. Manka has requested an updated SB work plan, but has not received one. The PC has items on the SB's 10/26/23 agenda. 11/1/23 hearing. 11/7/23 Bond vote.

- **Project Schedule**

This has not been updated since late August. M. Manka has an update on where we are: 30% comments have been received by the state. Stone Environmental is working on processing those comments and making tweaks based on the potential service area users' comments on the plans. They are working on

moving toward addressing FONSI mitigation matters and finalizing the table of contents for the specifications manual. Amy Macrellis is hoping to schedule a 30% design meeting with the DEC before 11/10/23. The 60% design will potentially begin in late November. After the bond vote there will be an updated project schedule with a more robust and detailed engineering schedule.

- **Communication Schedule & Public Outreach**

G. Gebauer reported that this depends on how the bond vote goes. No other meetings are planned at this time. The bond vote postcards went out. The video of the 10/18/23 informational meeting will be added to the website once the PC receives it from LCATV.

- **October 12th Selectboard Meeting**

The SB approved the executive summary and draft ordinance for public dissemination. These documents were available at the 10/18/23 informational meeting. Copies are also available at the Town Office, and they are up on the website.

- **October 18th Informational Meeting**

G. Gebauer reported that this was a similar presentation to the one on 9/13/23. There were good questions and comments. The meeting lasted 2 hours. M. Letorney agreed that there were good questions. We know why people oppose/support the project. There is a good understanding of how it will affect taxes.

- **October 26th Selectboard Meeting**

G. Lamphere plans to attend. He will connect with M. Manka to talk about the budget request and go over highlights. This SB meeting will have a discussion relating to the 11/1/23 hearing. There is a full agenda. The Town has hired a new Town Administrator, Hollie Delisle. The PC commends the SB for moving quickly.

- **November 1st Public Hearing**

G. Gebauer reported that this meeting will be dependent on how the SB decides to present it. They want the PC to give an overview of the project. It will be helpful to narrow down what they want. Engineers will be there to answer questions. The PC will probably give an abbreviated presentation, this will need to be decided at Thursday's SB meeting.

Public comment

None

FY'23 Planning Commission Town Report

G. Lamphere will work on a draft this week.

PC Budget Organization & Omissions

GL spoke with the Town Treasurer and hasn't yet heard back. He will follow up this week, but the understanding is that the CC budget will be moved out of the PC budget. There is also the question of grants reported elsewhere that are not relevant to the PC. The SB has decided to move the CC budget, likely for the upcoming budget cycle.

Correspondence

The PC followed up on previous correspondence and discussed whether people have received responses. Regarding previous correspondence from Arlo Pouliot, G. Lamphere reached out via email and has not heard back. G. Lamphere also reached out to Dave Lavalee. Dave responded but didn't have time to discuss at that moment. G. Lamphere is ready to connect when Dave has time. Dave did bring up his concerns at the last informational meeting, where they were addressed.

The PC received a letter dated 10/13/23 from Bruce Douglas, Wastewater Programs Manager at the DEC. This letter was in response to S. Jensen regarding concerns that Dave Whitney expressed. M. Reilly read aloud the letter from the DEC, which provided some background on the Indirect Discharge Program in general, and summarized the DEC's response to the submittals this program has received from the Town of Westford's consulting team.

The PC received correspondence from Larry White and from Tim Phillips. Both were directed to the project website and past presentations, where most of the questions were answered.

S. Jensen further addressed Tim Phillips' concerns about 3-phase power impacts on his family's farm. These concerns deserve assurance from the PC that this is not something that is being actively considered or advocated for in any way by the Town. The Phillips family deserves reassurance as this is their livelihood. M. Letorney will reach out via email.

2023 Work Plan

10/26 SB meeting: G. Lamphere will attend, and potentially G. Gebauer as well. Topics will include PC budget proposal and preparations for the 11/1 public hearing.

11/1 bond vote public hearing: This will include a 6pm floor vote for a switch to a 5-person SB and a 7pm discussion/hybrid meeting. Nanette and Susan will be running Zoom.

11/6 PC meeting: Similar to tonight's meeting, short agenda/checklist. Topics will include project schedules, Town Report, PC budget reorganization, and transition.

G. Gebauer asked about the zoning regulations and if there is a list of updates that will be up for review. M. Manka has a folder that contains regulations that need to be looked at. The Town Planner and Planning Assistant have regulations books that are marked up. This will be more involved than just a list, it will be a major update.

11/7 Bond Vote

11/9 SB meeting

11/20 PC meeting: close out VDCP grant. Will discuss deliverables, final invoices, final reimbursements. Final report is due in January. M. Manka will make notes for the individual taking over this responsibility. Discuss bond vote results.

12/4 meeting: may not be needed if there isn't anything valuable to discuss.

12/18 PC meeting: PC will discuss next steps and develop a work plan for 2024 based on that. The PC will discuss the meeting schedule for 2024.

G. Lamphere asked what we know about the SB plan/process for advertising/looking for the next Town Planner? M. Manka met with Carl on Friday and discussed ideas for transition. She will put together a memo for the SB. It would make sense to hire a former TA that does consultant work to manage WW and grants. The Planning Assistant can potentially staff the PC for a while. The Town will not be advertising for a new Town Planner immediately. The PC will be part of the process once M. Manka has a memo ready for the SB.

Adjourn:

G. Gebauer MOVED to adjourn.

M. Letorney SECONDED the motion.

The motion passed 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:27pm