

**TOWN OF WESTFORD  
WASTEWATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 27, 2024 MEETING**

**Members Present:** Holly Delisle (Town Administrator), George Lamphere (Planning Commissioner), Ron Rodjenski (Moderator), Harmony Cism (Planning Assistant, Minute Clerk), Jeremy Berger, Paul Birnholz, Martha Heath, Bill Hill, Lori Johnson, Carol Winfield

**Members Absent:** None

**Also Present:** John Kiernan – RCAP (Rural Community Assistance Partnership)

**Meeting Began:** 3:00pm

**Moderator Determination:** The group agreed to keep Ron as Moderator.

**Public Comment/Items Not on Agenda:** The group discussed whether to keep the name “Wastewater Study Oversight Committee,” or change the name. They decided to shorten the name to “Wastewater Alternatives Committee,” or WAC.

**Discussion:**

**Report of Community Ideas Submitted:** Holly Delisle put out a plea on FPF and in the newsletter to ask the community for alternative ideas. She has added lots of information to the wastewater tab on the Town website. Holly received two ideas from Town residents via email. One involved crossing the river to find new disposal sites, creating a municipal group to handle wastewater, and collaborating with other municipalities to see how they work together to protect the watershed. The other recommendation was to investigate a Cinderella composting toilet system. Holly will do another round of outreach to seek more alternatives.

The WAC will form a list of all submitted ideas. This will be done via an Excel spreadsheet. A Matrix will also be made using an Excel spreadsheet. The list of ideas will inform the matrix. Holly will create drafts of these to share with the Committee and post on the website.

Lori Johnson reported that Dan Strobridge had posted to FPF in January with 2 ideas: Having the Town purchase the Pigeon property, remove existing structures, and put in a mound system to serve the Common area; or constructing a new town hall at the Town Garage property.

Lori Johnson had some ideas: Purchasing the 1705 property; composting toilets; looking at other private properties near the Village Center; looking at the Westford Common Hall property; and looking at the small Town-owned property just south of the Village on Route 128.

There was discussion of the Town Office feasibility study and possible relocation. Building a new Town Office at the present site is not recommended due to restrictions relating to wetlands/parking/etc.

Carol Winfield would like to investigate the 1705 property. She suggested contacting George Pigeon. She also suggested speaking to the engineer who designed a septic system for the 1705 Property.

Bill Hill wondered if the problem was just the Town Office & Library. Which problem are we trying to solve? Do we support the community to grow & develop? Development has been an issue since 2008. Should we be looking to develop, rather than maintaining/sustaining? The WAC will look at all options, but what is the problem we are trying to solve?

Ron Rodjenski stated that there are immediate needs at the present Town Office/Library site now. Zoning and the Town Plan are more forward thinking.

Lori Johnson believes that the focus is the Town Office and Library. Taxpayers are responsible for these buildings.

George Lamphere suggested including broader options, including municipal buildings, civic buildings, failed systems, and ADU capacity.

Jeremy Berger stated that the originally proposed system is too big, and voters don't want development in the Town Center. A slimmed down system with enough capacity for existing development only would be preferred. We need to be cognizant of potential tax impacts for people all over town.

Carol Winfield referred to the 2008 survey regarding concerns or questions about the town's wastewater needs. According to her research, 74% of participants left this section blank.

Martha Heath stated that we need to take environmental concerns into consideration. It is important to protect waterways. What happens to the environment as systems fail around the Common?

#### **Matrix Development:**

The group discussed the development of the matrix. Suggested topics covered in the matrix include:

- Who does it serve (scope)
- Potential cost/initial design, engineering, installation/annual and future O&M cost
- Timing/Schedule
- Eligibility under current grants
- Protection of wetlands and waterways
- Is it permissible, will it require variances
- Size/Capacity
- Disruption to the Village Center/Town activities
- Familiarity of the technology/Technical risk
- Potential lifetime/cost of replacement
- Impact on other Town entities

It was noted that any project is disruptive on some level, and that pros and cons are subjective.

Ron Rodjenski commented that the Return on Investment (ROI) could tie back to the Town Plan. The community will benefit from a community system to enhance/redevelop the Village Center. Secondary impacts would include ADUs and commercial potential.

George Lamphere noted that the matrix needs to support wastewater solutions specifically, not explore options for relocating the Town Office. The matrix should be laid out to look at wastewater alternatives per the mission statement and the directive from the Selectboard.

#### **Task Assignments:**

Holly Delisle will prepare 2 separate documents:

- the "List" will include suggested ideas. This list will be posted to the website and distributed to the WAC.
- A preliminary outline of the "Matrix" will compare ideas and attributes. The List informs the Matrix. The draft matrix will be ready for the next meeting.

All ideas for desired attributes and solutions should be submitted to Holly.

George Pigeon will be invited to the next meeting. Paul will speak with him.

Martha Heath noted that all information should be in writing. Ron Rodjenski concurred that all communication and documents should be attributed to someone, No anonymous submissions. Correspondence should be introduced to the Committee as such during open meetings.

**Next meeting:** March 12<sup>th</sup>, unless George Pigeon has different availability

**Rural Community Assistance Partnership:** John Kiernan from RCAP was present. He gave a brief statement. RCAP engages with small/rural communities to assist with various things. John attended today to see if he can help, and he believes that he can. John has 25 years of experience as an engineer. He has done many original studies. He helped develop a matrix for ARPA funds for Shoreham. He has some ideas to help this group, which he will share at the next meeting. John commented that providing septic capacity in the Village Center is very beneficial, regardless of what it does. He has experience with a project similar to the original Maple Shade project that has been very successful. The WAC invited John back to see if it can use his services.

**Adjourn:** 4:20pm