

**TOWN OF WESTFORD  
WASTEWATER ALTERNATIVES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES FOR MARCH 19, 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:**

**Also Present:** Maureen Wilcox, Dan Strobridge, Dave Gauthier, Deb Jorschick (Selectboard)

**Meeting Began:** 3:00pm

**Public Comment/Items Not on Agenda:**

Carol Winfield stated that she has spoken with Erin DeVries of the Vermont River Conservancy. This will be discussed during the 1705 discussion.

Holly Delisle reported that the time of this meeting is not convenient for some members of the public with 9-5 commitments. The scheduled time worked best for people in the room, but the committee should discuss a time change. It is very difficult to make it work for everyone in the community – the committee will stick with the currently scheduled time. Minutes and recordings will be posted as soon after a meeting as possible.

Paul Birnholz said he is upset that the Selectboard overstepped its bounds in wanting to discuss the 1705 property via email after the last WAC meeting. Conversations should be had during WAC or Selectboard meetings. Community members should be encouraged to come to these meetings. Ron Rodjenski agreed that other committees shouldn't be doing this committee's work. Martha Heath & Bill Hill asked for clarification on Paul's statement. Paul explained that Pat Haller sent an email to the Selectboard after the last WAC meeting asking questions and bringing up the brownfield.

Martha Heath was surprised to hear that Lori Johnson spoke to George Pigeon and that Carol Winfield spoke to the River Conservancy. Committee members don't generally go off on their own and do investigations without discussing them with the committee first. Ron Rodjenski reminded everyone that task assignment is on the agenda. Individual investigations are not directed. Lori thinks it shows initiative, and that it is important to move forward. Martha thinks a public committee should work together. It is a better process that is more structured. Carol agreed with Lori that there are things to investigate and if someone wants to investigate, she has no problem with that. This is an appointed group of volunteers. All Information gathered is public information. In her opinion, as an action committee, if anyone wants to take action that isn't infringing on anything, go for it. Paul said that Lori reached out to him to see if he was okay with her reaching out to George Pigeon. Paul agrees with Martha that committee members should check with the committee before doing things on behalf of the committee. Ron sees an issue if the committee decides not to do something, but 2 or 3 committee members go talk to someone anyway. Hearsay has an impact on the committee when members are representing the town but coming from personal interest. The second issue is how to present information. When things are brought back to the committee, it should be clear where those things are coming from, and they should be factual. Martha would feel more comfortable if Lori could have emailed the committee to see if there were any objections. She would also feel more comfortable if the information was in writing or coming directly from the source at a meeting. Holly reminded the committee that this is not a voting group.

**Discussion:**

**1705 Investigation Prep:**

Carol Winfield reported that she called and left a message for the River Conservancy about the 1705 property. She got a call back from Erin DeVries, who had spoken with Ron. Carol wanted to know if the Town opened

interest in the 1705 property, would the River Conservancy be interested in working with the Town? She received a complicated response that she understood as yes, they would love to work with the town. The River Conservancy was involved with the brownfield remediation that was done on the 1705 property. They can help with stormwater and conserving land. The topic is very complex and subjective because we are trying to get an engineering study to determine capacity. Carol also asked about affordable housing and potential funding. The River Conservancy is expected to provide an email by the next meeting giving a synopsis of what they can do if we decide to work on the 1705 property. Carol thinks that this site has the greatest potential. Martha Heath asked if Carol would share this email? Carol replied yes, and Holly will put it on the website.

Ron Rodjenski spoke about the approved Selectboard request for \$5K. The Selectboard wants a scope of work. George Lamphere asked where this money would come from. The motion was to take it out of the Town Office feasibility funds. Holly confirmed that \$5K is the cap. Ron said it should be a simple scope of work. What is the impact of the brownfield? The engineer needs to figure out soils minus known constraints. George wanted to know if this would fall under the town's procurement policy and need to go out to bid. Carol asked how many bids we need. Lori stated that the motion was for funding "not to exceed \$5K" to the existing engineer because he has existing info. A new engineer would cost more to repeat the same information.

*Excerpt from 3/14/24 Selectboard Minutes: "Deb motioned to cap spending for wastewater capacity investigation on 1705 at \$5,000, to get an itemized report and bill, and to use money from the town office feasibility ARPA to fund it. Casey seconded. Motion passed 5-0."*

Lori Johnson was also at the most recent Selectboard meeting. She spoke about not needing to use the well on the 1705 property. What is capacity with/without the well? How will it impact the existing house? Removal of the shallow well frees up some capacity.

Paul Birnholz thought we already knew the current design of a mound system for a 4-br house on the 1705 property. The question is how much additional capacity will there be if there is no well/well shield? Additional pretreatment is another step to add more capacity. The scope of work is to determine the capacity needed by the Town Office & Library. Stone has calculated this information, but Lori wants to have it recalculated/confirmed. George Lamphere wondered if the calculations are for current numbers for today or if they allow for growth such as more employees. Excess capacity may allow for growth.

Martha Heath asked if we are only looking at 1705 to solve the Town Office and Library issues. Lori responded that that's the priority because taxpayers are responsible for these buildings. Martha recalled a statement that Town employees won't drink the water and wondered if this is true? Lori said that the water has been tested 3 times in the last few years and is fine. The problem is from a 1994 report saying the water was not safe to drink. This was before a well was drilled to serve these properties.

Holly will work with Ron to send a message to David Tudhope, the engineer, with the scope of work. Based on his response, we can bring it back to the committee. Jeremy Berger asked if we know the scope. Ron stated that it is a question of maximum capacity. This will help decide what users can connect. Soils dictate capacity. Holly added that it is important to know if the design is permissible. Lori said that part of hiring an engineer is to get a permit. The committee needs permission from George Pigeon. He gave Lori permission to talk to the engineer. Ron stated that Stone Environmental had gotten sign offs to access private properties. There is a standard form. David Tudhope will report directly to Holly. Holly will bring the information to the group and post it to the website. Bill Hill will ask for George Pigeon for his signature on the form. Lori said that she has already spoken to Tudhope, and she would like to be involved with Holly and interact with the engineer.

**Matrix Work:** Ron wondered if it is feasible to get down to 5 options. Which options do we pursue? Bill Hill reviewed the map of ideas. Paul wants to do the first screening based on the raw list. Ron explained that this is a triage process.

The committee reviewed the list of ideas and prioritized the most feasible focus areas. The top three areas on the list are the 1705 property, the Westford Common Hall Property, and knocking on doors of private properties in the Common District.

**Task Assignments:**

Bill Hill will update the map on the Matrix.

Bill Hill will gain George Pigeon's permission.

Ron Rodjenski and Holly Delisle will work on scope & permissions.

George Lamphere & Martha Heath will check in with the WCH.

Jeremy Berger recalled that the WCH had test pits dug. To use this property, they would have to blast through ledge, which would add \$100K.

Martha Heath asked if the WCH says yes, do we then talk to neighboring properties? Well shields may be problematic.

Bill Hill stated that identifying options was the 1<sup>st</sup> step in mission statement.

The committee should think about a presentation to the Selectboard for their next meeting. This will be discussed at the next WAC meeting.

**Next meeting:** March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**Adjourn:** 4:26pm