

**Town of Londonderry, Vermont
Village Wastewater Committee
Special Meeting Minutes
Friday, October 13, 2023 – 9:00 AM
Neighborhood Connections, 5700 VT Rte. 100
Londonderry, VT**

Village Wastewater Committee (VWC) Members Present: Sharon Crossman, Larry Gubb, Tom Metcalfe, Gary Hedman

Others in Attendance:

Online: Chrissy Haskins (Dufresne Group – Project Engineers), Susan Westa (Windham Regional Commission), Juli Beth Hinds (Principal at Birchline Planning LLC), Heather Stephenson (Resident and IT consultant)

1. Call meeting to order

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 AM

2. Additions or Deletions to the Agenda:

Sue Westa mentioned that Juli Beth Hinds would be joining us later in the meeting, under item # 4.

3. Approve Minutes of 10/6/23 meeting

A correction was made regarding some confusion regarding a site listed on the potential sites table and some typos were corrected

Sharon Crossman made a motion to approve the minutes of the 10/6/23 meeting, as corrected. Gary Hedman seconded. The motion passed.

4. Public Presentation

Sue wrote an article about the presentation/meeting on 10/17/23, but was unable to have it included in the Vermont Journal printed version, because of their submission deadline for their printed paper. It was able to be included on their website. She added that it had also been published in the Chester Telegraph, however it was described as a “public hearing” which is not correct. A photo was also included which the VWC wished to have removed as it depicted sewage flowing out of a pipe into a river. Sharon asked if a correction could be made. Sue will request the changes. The flyer has been posted around town and on the WRC website. Sharon had planned to place more flyers and the announcement hopefully would be distributed on the Town’s e-mail list of residents that have signed up to receive

announcements and information. Larry asked if it were possible to place on the front page of the Town website for good visibility. Sharon said she would see if that could be done. Sue said that Heather Stephenson reported an announcement being placed on the Flood Brook School website.

Sue said that the remaining items to be checked into were wi-fi at the school and if there is wi-fi, we would need to get the password and any information needed about it, including any link information, from the Principal. Juli Beth Hinds would like to access her presentation via an online connection. Sharon said she would work on that. Heather said there was a guest network at the school with a password that the school principal could provide information about. Sue asked if Heather could set up a ZOOM link via the Londonderry Planning Commission account. Heather said she could do so if that was the preference of the VWC. The VWC agreed. Heather said she would set up the meeting and provide a link to the invite for posting. Heather said she'll set up a link so we can test the link. She said the Flood Brook School calendar announced the meeting as running from 6:00PM to 7:00PM.

Sue said that the number of questions will likely determine how long the meeting goes beyond the presentations. Heather asked how many on the VWC will be attending remotely. Sue responded that the VWC all planned to be present at the school and she, Chrissy and Juli Beth Hinds would also be there in person, but one presenter (Emily Hackett) would be online. Heather asked about a laptop being present and Sue said a projector and screen was available and she planned to bring a laptop and an extra projector for backup.

Tom discussed how Emily could both access her presentation as well as be able to answer questions, wondering if one could be done via projector and screen and one using the large video monitor. Juli Beth said that Emily and others from the state generally spoke, but were not visible on screen. The VWC agreed that was fine. Heather said the speaker system would be the Town's "Owl" system. Heather said that if the "Owl" did not work with the projector, she has used it with the large monitor and it works fine and that could be used as a back up. Sue and Heather have prior experience with the equipment and will help set things up. Heather said the system has been tested in a larger crowd and worked well. Heather said to make sure the school would be opened at 5:30 PM to get into the school and set up. Sue and Sharon said this had already been arranged.

Sue suggested everything will be channeled through ZOOM where interaction will be possible. Gary suggested that questions be directed to the "chat" in the ZOOM. Juli Beth reiterated the same and that it will be announced at the beginning of the meeting. Juli Beth will help Sue with chat monitoring and copying the "chat" records after the meeting, so all questions can be answered.

Sharon suggested we all introduce ourselves to Juli Beth since this was the first time the VWC had a chance to meet with her.

Sue discussed the meeting agenda to pass out at the meeting and asked if the agenda was good. Tom said the agenda looked good, and recommended the addition of time and place. Tom said we should think about posting it on the website and other places. Sue suggested adding the ZOOM link to it. Sue will make the changes. She said she was also thinking of adding that the chat should only be used for questions.

Juli Bath asked if we had a place people could send their feedback. Sue said she could set up a GMail account where people could send additional questions and feedback.

Heather asked about specific language to include in the language for the link. Sue said “Londonderry Village Wastewater Project Public Meeting” would work as the title, all agreed.

Sue asked several questions. One was regarding Chrissy Haskin’s overview with notes about “potential installs”. Sharon believed it may have been a misplaced comment. Sue said the other question in the notes was “what do technicalities determine”. There was confusion about where the comments/questions came from. Juli Beth wondered if they were referring to types of wastewater systems. Chrissy said that a presentation on the various types of systems had already been done.

Tom asked Chrissy what the major bullet points of her presentation would be. Chrissy said that it would include points about the need for wastewater systems. Next would be what has been done with regard to identifying potential sites, field work, where things stand currently with potential sites and what are the next steps.

Gary asked Sue if she could remove the bullets from the agenda before it goes out for posting. Sue said she could do that and explained she wanted to provide something for the Committee first to review, which was the reason for the bullet points.

Chrissy had a question regarding Pingree Park in consideration of it being a large focus for a time. She asked if the VWC thought it was important that everyone know it was off the table. Gary said he thought it was important to reiterate that the Selectboard took it off the table, so all are aware going forward. All on the Committee agreed. Chrissy will mention the Town owned parcels that are being pursued. There was brief discussion of why Town owned properties had been included in the initial search, in consideration of their not needing property owner negotiations, nor a cost for the property or easement which would mean a savings for those expenses which could be applied for other parts of the project, such as construction and reducing the overall cost of the project.

Juli Beth reviewed her presentation and discussed what she would like to focus on. One point was to go over what happens if nothing were to be done, if this project were to not go through. She said what is important for people to know is how much it would cost to replace a failed individual septic system. She spoke of Waitsfield as an example where the tax base was hurt when a major business moved out of town and what the town did as a

solution with 8 onsite cluster systems. 5 were financed through the town at 2.5% across 30 years. The town supported the engineering permitting process and holds easements on the systems to ensure repayment of the loans, with one business having already paid back the loan in full. Advanced treatment systems were put in to support economic growth. It was completely voluntary and there is no central system. It is working very well and property value in the area has increased more than a million dollars in 8 years. In addition to Lawson's Finest Liquids, The Big Picture Theater was no longer spending \$300/week to pump their tank, which was a large expense, threatening the survival of their business. She provided the specifics of several businesses in Waitsfield that got an onsite cluster system and how it was all voluntary, with the help of the town and other grants. It did require a bond vote, but the bond language stipulated that a percentage of the cost would have to be paid back by the system users. This meant a small impact to the tax payers and the positive impact to the community was very large.

The next point would be to discuss what the towns of Warren, Westford and Wolcott have done with STEP (Septic Tank Effluent Pumping) systems, where each property has a septic tank for solids, but effluent is pumped to a community septic field. What she has seen is a relatively small bond repayment. The question then turns to the cost of operation and maintenance. She said if structured correctly, the monthly payments become realistic. In Westford the estimate is \$85/month, where the system is small. In Wolcott, she said the monthly payment might be smaller, based on their being more connections. In Westford, the Selectboard and the Planning Commission have proposed that voters pay enough of the share of operation and maintenance to make it more affordable for connected users, based on the idea that it supports the village. The projected cost on a \$400,000 single family home is about \$5/month for those not plugged in, \$85/month for users, plugged in to the system. The alternative is replacement of existing systems for a very large amount, with no possibilities of adding a bedroom or accessory apartment and expanding a business. In Wolcott, avenues to bring the costs down to make them more affordable for low income households and will be talking to some community foundations about a "maintenance endowment" to provide some annual funding to keep down the costs of operation.

Lastly, she wanted to talk about the cost to operate the system per year. She said that totally depends on the type of system and the number of users. The estimate for Wolcott is about \$65,000/year and for Westford, the estimate is about \$85,000 per year. She said surprisingly, those amounts line up very closely with annual budgets of each of those town's libraries. In the comparison, while it is not cost free, compared to some other items in town budgets, it is comparatively small.

The VWC agreed that the points Juli Beth proposed would be very helpful in helping the Londonderry Community know more and understand more about the process and costs in towns that are similar in size.

Sharon, mentioned that the VWC would like to see more support from the Selectboard with hopes that they would attend the upcoming meeting. Juli Beth said there is a good amount of information available through the state, as well as support.

Tom had a question for Juli Beth about the general feeling of the public about pump systems directly from people's tanks versus gravity systems to a central collection point before pumping. Juli Beth responded that STEP systems have proven to be reliable and seem to work very well with very few problems. She suggested a visit to see the Warren, VT system and get a tour. She said people generally ask if an alarm will be going off all time or if there will be unpleasant smells, but while there is an alarms system, to alert if something is not functioning well, it generally does not go off all the time if the systems are maintained regularly and unlike an individual private system, there is better maintenance and the alarm tells you when something is wrong, while there is no alarm on most individually owned systems, so one does not know there is a problem. With a municipal STEP system, there is someone to maintain the system and to call when there is a problem. Juli Beth said that system managers also recommend them.

Sharon said it has been difficult to get the Selectboard to even visit Manchester to view systems, in spite of several attempts to do so. Juli Beth suggested maybe a video be done or a live meeting from Warren.

Gary asked if anything has already done we may be able to use. Juli Beth said there was, but it did not include video. Sue said public meetings can be accessed from anywhere. Gary also said that it might be useful for the State to put together a video showing this information that towns across the state experiencing the same challenges could use. He too reiterated that it was disheartening to not see more Selectboard interest in the systems, how they would work and the versatility of their installations, assuming factors like soils and groundwater tests, make them feasible.

Tom supported the idea of something at the State level that could provide information, but was not sure it would help convince people. Juli Beth said the same occurs across the country and said that most people were more interested in their local situation versus hearing about other communities, but it is valuable to provide examples early on so people understand the process.

Discussion went to how the meeting would proceed with Doug Friant (the Town moderator) as the moderator. Gary said he would keep his introduction short with introductions of the members of the VWC, a short history and purpose.

Gary reiterated that it is important to have engagement of Town officials. Juli Beth said that it has been key as Selectboards will have to engage at some point, based on their being the only authority to make decisions and without being engaged throughout the process, it is difficult to make a decision based on not fully knowing what is going on or being substantially versed in all aspects of the project discussion. She said their participation is

critical, especially in key policy decisions. Gary said we could do better at working with the Selectboard to move things forward. Gary suggested that in the Selectboard meeting prior to the VWC meeting, that we put forth how important it is, that the Selectboard participate. Chrissy said she had screenshot the slide show presentation for managerial and administrative training and is willing to make it available to all interested who could not make it to the training session. Gary said it had been recorded. The VWC may be able to get the recording for all to view, as well.

5. Next VWC Meeting

Next meeting would be scheduled for next Tuesday, October 17, 2023, at 6:00 PM, Flood Brook School

6. Adjourn:

Sharon made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tom seconded, motion approved
All approved to adjourn and the meeting was adjourned at 10:02 AM

The next regular meetings of the VWC will be **the first Friday of every month at 10:09 AM**
and **the third Tuesday of every month at 6:00 PM**

Respectfully Submitted,
Larry Gubb
Secretary, Village Wastewater Committee

Approved _____
Village Wastewater Committee
Sharon Crossman, Interim Chair

Link to AV recording of October 13, 2023 meeting below.

Topic: Village Waste Water Project

Date: Oct 13, 2023 09:02 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

You can copy the recording information below and share with others

<https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/PJTiwRZuch42zl1ERGplrN-xHkmInjUf4Ho7Q5TmGQ2pBNnhz8ffKk-SgmIloapH.6WE243DWBU2IhFFA>

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