

**Town of Londonderry, Vermont
Village Wastewater Committee
Meeting Minutes
Friday, March 1, 2024 – 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 (online)

Others in Attendance:

None

Online:

Chrissy Haskins (Dufresne Group – Project Engineers), Susan Westa (Windham Regional Commission) Shane O’Keefe (Administrator, Town of Londonderry), Emily Hackett (EI - Environmental Engineer – VT DEC)

1. Call meeting to order

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM

2. Additions or Deletions to the Agenda:

No additions or deletions

3. Approve Minutes of 02/02/23 meeting

Tom made a motion to approve the minutes of the 02/02/23 minutes. Sharon seconded, the VWC voted unanimously to approve

4. Discuss and Debrief - 90% Report: Public Information Meeting - February 19 Presentation @ Selectboard Meeting

Key comments and remarks from attendees: What questions/issues do we need to address?

Chrissy said there was not a lot of information new to discuss. She said she thought the informational meeting went well. Tom asked Shane if he knew how many people had attended the informational meeting. Larry said he had seen between 16 and 19 people listed online at various times. Chrissy said she counted the number of chairs set up saying there were 17 and then noted the additional people standing. Shane said there

were 22 people that had signed in, minus the Selectboard members and himself. Chrissy added that 4-5 people were in attendance or online as those involved in the project from the State, Windham Regional Commission (WRC), Shane as Town Administrator and herself representing Dufresne Group, the project engineers. That brought the total attendees, including VWC members and Selectboard members to approximately 50 people. Chrissy mentioned that GNAT was able to live broadcast the meeting, but those watching would not be signed in or able to interact, as those online were able to, so there is no way to know for sure how many attended overall.

Shane commented that he thought Chrissy's presentation was well done and well presented. Chrissy will send Shane a copy of the presentation. Sharon also commented that the presentation went well and that Chrissy had done a great job at answering questions. Sue asked to be copied on the presentation so it could be posted on the WRC website. Tom added that he found there appeared to be a positive feel to the meeting, above what he was expecting, noting that there were still some comments that were not all in the positive. He felt that overall, there was a feeling of support. Shane added that he had additional discussions with a meeting attendee who was hesitant about the project and found that after the discussion they understood more about the positive aspects of what the project will do for Londonderry, even if the bond amount was covered by the Grand List, recognizing the cost to all taxpayers was de minimis.

Tom mentioned that discussion of the potential of paying for service connections added a positive incentive. Chrissy added that she had worked out amounts that would have to be put aside annually to pay for a replacement and the figures are comparable, saying that most people are not putting aside that amount annually in the event their system fails and they have to replace it. Tom reiterated what Chrissy had said in earlier meetings that for most people, the cost comes as a \$30,000 to \$50,000 payment to replace their failed system. Sharon added that she thought that aside from some questions and comments that expressed hesitancy about the project, there seemed to be a fair number of people who were interested in the project. She asked if any other attendees at this meeting had any specific comments about the informational meeting. Gary said he was unable to attend the informational meeting, but suggested providing the video recording of the meeting ASAP to allow others who were unable to attend to hear the presentation.

Emily said she thought the informational meeting went well mentioning a different tone than she had felt during previous meetings. Gary said that he saw various social media postings that offered some positive thoughts on the Project and felt that there was some good energy, even this close to the bond vote.

Sharon mentioned she provided some updated information to the Planning Commission (PC) and the interim Chair of the PC suggested Planning Commission members urge people to vote on the bond issue on Town Meeting Day

Tom had a question about the Power Point presentation and the recording of the meeting and if they could be placed in a prominent place on the Town website so people could easily see them. Shane agreed to post both on the Town webpage. Chrissy said that GNAT would provide the recording of the meeting, possibly today. Heather Stephenson went to the SB members individually to see if it would be permissible to do a short video of outtakes of their comments from the meeting to place on the website. Chrissy recommended continued outreach on social media, including the VWC Facebook page, the Londonderry Community Forum Facebook page and more, with some graphics comparing the cost of replacement of a system for individuals to user fees, the cost to the Town of Londonderry of only 10 cents on the dollar for the overall cost of the project, adding mention of a “social contract” community contribution to paying for projects that may only benefit a few directly, but contribute to the Town and community overall, in a similar way to paying for culverts, bridges, roads, equipment, education, etc.

Shane had a question about recordings of the informational meeting, one being by GNAT (Greater Northshire Access Television) and the other recorded on ZOOM. He asked where the ZOOM recording resides. Larry said that when he logged in to the informational meeting online, it said the recording was by the Planning Commission (PC), believing that the Planning Commission has a ZOOM account where the recording of the meeting can be found and stored. Shane said he would try to locate the PC ZOOM account recording and see if he could provide both for the public to view. He had an additional comment relayed from Doug Friant, the Town Moderator. Doug had done some research on Australian ballot issues. He said that questions can be asked on the floor about the bond vote and suggested that VWC members be prepared to answer questions, saying the Selectboard members will be prepared as well. Chrissy added that Doug also indicated that any responses to questions had to refer to factual information, not an opinion as to whether someone should vote positively or negatively for the bond.

Tom asked about what constitutes fact. Chrissy said she was not an expert on the rules. Shane suggested that sticking to what is contained within the 90% report and informational presentation based in that report, would be factual. Sharon asked if Chrissy would be attending Londonderry’s Town Meeting. Shane said he did not believe that would be necessary and Chrissy said her own town meeting was on the same day, which she would be attending, making her unable to attend Londonderry’s meeting.

5. VWC Motion to show support for SB Motions to authorize ARPA grant agreements.

Sue was unable to attend the informational meeting, but said she was looking forward to listening to the recording of the meeting. She mentioned that the informational meeting was covered on the front page of the *Brattleboro Reformer*, (newspaper) which also provided a link to GNAT with a note to watch for the recording of the informational

meeting on the GNAT website. Gary asked if the VWC wants to consider adding a link to the *Brattleboro Reformer* article as an added reference to the Project. Chrissy mentioned that the *Chester Telegraph* had done an article in late January about the 60% report. Sharon suggested doing all things mentioned to get the word out. She mentioned that Heather Stephenson's technical skills have helped immensely with providing a means people to find information about all sorts of activities going on in Londonderry, online.

Chrissy had a question (asked at the informational meeting) for Emily about potential future floodplain regulations and how they might negatively impact this project going forward. She said there was also a follow-up to the question on-line, where VT Senate bill S.213 was referred to. Emily said she was not familiar with the legislation. Chrissy asked Emily if she would provide any information she finds out about the legislation, to her. Chrissy also mentioned that she noted that the legislation, if passed would not go into effect until July 1, 2026. She said that the Project needed to be fully permitted by this year, so that there really should be no impact to the project from that specific legislation and regulations that come with it. Emily mentioned that she recognized that changes were proposed, but she and others do not know when they are going to come or if they will happen. She suggested that generally, until something is in writing or is passed in the legislature, there is uncertainty. Shane said that two SB members had also inquired about this issue and that Shane directed them to our State Senator for more information.

Chrissy asked if the VWC wanted to discuss what will come next of the bond vote passes. She said there was one property owner that requested that they not be contacted by anyone, regarding the Project. She added that all others who have inquired seemed very interested in the Project. She said she could provide us a list of people to begin contacting to gather more information from and provide information to. Tom asked if the VWC to knock on doors. Chrissy suggested that the VWC should not begin to knock randomly on doors. The VWC understood this. Sharon said that a number of the business property owners were not residents of Londonderry and it was discussed that they would not be able to vote on the bond.

Sharon sent an inquiry she had gotten to Chrissy for a response. Chrissy affirmed that she had received it and will respond to it.

There was further discussion about outreach to residents between this meeting and the bond vote. Gary said there really hasn't been information as to how residents may support or not support the bond vote. He suggested anything we can provide up to and on the day of the vote might be helpful. Shane said he was unsure of what the definitive rules were for any information that urged people to vote in any direction in relation to proximity of the polling place and suggested that Kelly Pajala, the Town Clerk, would be the person to consult regarding those rules. He said copies of the presentation for the informational meeting would likely be allowed since they do not

present any suggestion as to how anyone should vote. Gary agreed and said that perhaps some posters with highlights from the presentation would be good along with members of the VWC being present to answer questions. Tom agreed that if permitted, the idea was a good one. Gary and Sharon concurred. Larry asked if a poster showing the various options for financing, as well as information highlighting the cost per \$200,000 or property value might be useful. He also mentioned the value of what the Town would be getting in grant funds, versus the cost to the Town at 10% of the overall cost as being important to property owners. Sharon suggested that at this point people are unlikely to read the entire 90% report. Larry reiterated that highlighting these most important considerations would be good to have on display. Discussion centered on what points to use and how to present them. Sue asked if handouts of the pages with the critical points could be made. Shane said the Selectboard had put together a multi-page copy of the pages from the report that offered critical information and the recommendation at the end of the report as part of the informational meeting packet and as required as part of that meeting and for the bond vote. Altogether, with other statutory requirements about the bond vote, it was a 16 page document.

Sharon thought we could take information from that, to create something more compact and brief that people can read quickly at Town Meeting. Larry mentioned the main reasons for doing the project were important as well as the cost options and comparisons, especially the 10% of the total. Tom suggested the estimated user cost would be a good point. He asked if there was anything in the report that referred to need for the project. Chrissy said that Section 3 of the report provided reasons for the Project, but more from a technical and regulatory context, than in layman's terms. Tom asked if there was anything she could think of that we could pull from that section of the report that would be useful in providing a quick review of the need for the Project. She said there are some base reasons, for example, how many systems are too close to wells, that might be good points to draw from, saying Section 3 is a summary of the technical reasons for doing the Project. Tom said there were bullet points in Section 3 that could be drawn from.

Chrissy said someone had commented on how need could have been evaluated when the south village masterplan study had not yet been done. She said that her response explained that need was evaluated in the wastewater report which was separate from the master plan study which will be parallel and may find there is even more additional need, when completed.

Sharon asked if Gary might be able to help with this effort between now and Town Meeting. Gary went through the list of what we just discussed saying that if permitted, the VWC should proceed with that as a plan. Chrissy reiterated that highlighting the 10 cents on the dollar cost to the Town should be a priority. Chrissy said she had calculated the math and the cost is 10.08 cents on the dollar or effectively about 10 cents on the dollar.

6. Review VWW Ordinance – Discuss Model Proposed by WRC / Julie Beth Hines (Sue & JB)

Sharon suggested we put discussion of the ordinance be postponed until the outcome of the bond vote is known. The VWC agreed that if the bond vote passes, the ordinance will be one of the first things to be worked on so the VWC can pass it to the SB for their review and ultimate passage of it.

7. Critical Path

Potential Fee Structures (Chrissy & Shane)

Discuss RFP for Easement Appraisals for Purchase and/or Donation of Private Properties

Chrissy said she had received an e-mail this morning from Martha Dale. The e-mail had been sent to Martha Dale, Melissa Brown and Taylor Prouty (all members of the Selectboard) asking if the SB should let people know who will be paying what for the local match (bond) for the capital costs of the project. Will it be users solely or will it be the Grand List? Martha asked if the VWC could provide some advice on this question to the SB. Tom said a decision has not been made on this subject, but pointed out that as Shane had mentioned, the cost to Grand List taxpayers was de minimis with regard to what the Town receives in return and value. He compared the cost of \$13 per \$200,000 worth of property value to the cost of coffee and a lunch sandwich and mentioned the social contract where everyone in Town pays for numerous things in Town which not everyone uses directly or constantly. He said this is critical for the viability and economic future of the Town and other Town planning initiatives, to stand behind, as the community did for those flooded this past July, in support of the village centers as a whole. Larry was in agreement that the cost was very small in relative sense and that it had a lasting effect lasting for decades and after the 30 year bond payments, only the users are paying for O&M, for the remaining life of the system, until such time as it needs replacement or upgrading. Chrissy asked if the VWC could respond to Martha with what the VWC agreed to regarding inclusion of the Grand List in payment for the capital cost of the Project. Tom said the VWC is only 4 voters, but that we are also residents and that he would defer to and support the SB's final decision, but his thoughts would be to suggest that the de minimis cost with the inclusion of the Grand List to cover the local match for the capital cost of the Project should be supported. Larry said that the issue would come forth at some point and that now seemed as good a time as any to make a suggestion agreeing that the de minimis cost should encourage inclusion of the Grand List for the local match to the capital costs of the Project. Sharon said Shane may be able to help with input to the response to Martha and other members of the SB. Shane said that his understanding was that the SB had indicated that either the costs would be on the users only or the bond vote would be a signal of support or non-support for inclusion of the Grand List, but he indicated there was no official vote on whether to include all on the Grand List as paying for the local match

portion of the Project (the bond) or place the entire cost on users only. Tom reiterated that the “worst case” scenario would be to include the Grand List in the shared cost for the local match to the Project (10%) capital cost, but added that that “worst case” is still de minimis relative to the 90% of the cost being covered by the Grant. The other option would be the SB deciding to put the entire local match cost on the users. Tom repeated that we should assume that the bond vote is a vote of support for the entire community (Grand List) pitching in at the cost of a few cups of coffee per \$200,000 of assessed property value or the cost of travel to Manchester to buy their cup of coffee. Sue added that if the village centers are not supported, a cup of coffee might have to include a drive to Manchester to find one to buy.

8. Next Steps for 90% Report (Chrissy & Emily)

No discussion

10. Other Business

**Repeat Water Testing Program: Request fresh kits for both Villages
Discuss need for Project Oversight, i.e. Manger/Point Person during phases of construction.**

There was agreement to hold off on all of these concerns for the time being and until the results of the bond vote are known.

11. Next VWC Meeting Date

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

12. Adjourn

Tom made a motion to adjourn
Sharon seconded
Motion passed
Meeting was adjourned at 10:03 AM

Respectfully Submitted,
Larry Gubb
Secretary, Village Wastewater Committee

Approved _____.

Village Wastewater Committee

Sharon Crossman, Interim Chair

Link to AV recording of March 1, 2024 meeting below.

Topic: Village Waste Water Study (Gail Mann- 802-856-7669)

Date: March 1, 2024 09:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

You can copy the recording information below and share with others

<https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/dq56ThPub4z6cOdXlHLvceRKBQITm7e89cACfjsYfpGnL8h9EQmJvwitb8HARSgs.12UeNI5UiK-BUuJg>

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