

West Acton Sewer Action Advisory Committee
December 14, 2017, 7:00 p.m.
Acton Town Hall, Room 9

Meeting Minutes

Present: Committee members Janet Adachi, Chairman; Joanne Bissetta, Ann Chang, Samuel Rice, David Wellinghoff; Town Engineer Paul Campbell; Joe Shea, Senior V.P., and Jack Troidl, Project Manager, Woodard & Curran.

Absent: Committee members J.D. Head, Peter Henry, Garry McCarthy, Bharat Shah

Chairman called meeting to order shortly after 7:00 p.m.

Review of 11/9/2017 minutes postponed until next meeting.

Mr. Campbell, as follow-up to 11/9/2017 discussion, provided additional information from Town records about West Acton properties with failed septic systems. High groundwater, soils map indicates "urban land not rated," meaning not good for septic systems. Health Department data on failures are result of Title V testing.

Sewer District Costs/Funding

Messrs. Shea and Troidl provided a slide-presentation overview of sewer district costs/financing with reference to previous Fort Pond Brook sewerage. Need to distinguish between general public benefit and specific parcel benefit: sewer betterment charges are parcel-specific.

Fort Pond Brook project encompassed 678 parcels initially. In calculating costs, needed to account for Town-wide general benefits, such as to environment; future capacity (supersizing) and School District avoided costs due to sewer connection rather than on-site septic system. 1667.67 SBUs. Cost allocated among residential and non-residential properties; one SBU = single-family home with 3 BRs.

General benefits to Town included Pine Hawk archaeological site: added no value to sewer project so users should not have to pay for cost. Other costs incurred during project but not benefitting project would include land acquisition, paving, studies.

Future capacity/supersizing represented \$1.16M cost for oversized pipes (18" rather than 12") in anticipation of expansion to West Acton and other areas. Future project would pay for additional pumping station and pumps. Supersizing not properly cost of sewer district, so cost paid by Town. Sewer enterprise fund created to account for supersizing obligation.

Avoided costs of School District main campus were much debated and cost for West Acton campus similarly is likely to involve lots of discussion.

Total project cost offset by general benefit, etc., leaving 17M specific benefit chargeable via betterment fees.

Allocation of sewer capacity uses Title V standards as guide. Calculated SBU: 12,311. Cost for individual property owner spread over 30 years; quarterly payments, including interest on loan. Add back avoided-cost parcels to get total of 1667.67 SBUs, representing full capacity; Finance Department focused on 1383.89 SBUs (omitting municipal, School District, Housing Authority avoided-cost parcels).

Project loans: 3 MA state revolving fund (SRF) loans for eligible costs (30 years via home rule petition); municipal bonds for ineligible costs. Current model: 2.4% or 2.7% interest. Two home-rule petitions: 1) to get 30-year term; and 2) to pass through to customer whatever interest rate Town gets (as opposed to what state prescribed which could result in overcharging customers).

Acton provided waivers, pending completion of system, to owners with failed septic systems so that as soon as sewer district started operation, would have customers paying into Enterprise Fund to cover initial costs. Customers have option of paying off betterment or apportioning; numerous customers paid off, funds went to Enterprise Fund, providing additional, unexpected revenue stream. Town tracks betterments, has collected for nearly 2K SBUs.

West Acton cost estimate: Current SRF loan rate 2%, likely to stay at that level for a while. 18-month cycle: apply 18 months in advance of when need loan. Lots of blank spaces to fill in, such as considering supersizing to accommodate Indian Village, general benefits to Town. Among avoided costs: Citizens Library, fire station, Windsor Building, Post Office; cannot charge betterments for government buildings but can charge for benefit of sewerage. Primary streets wider, greater than 24' wide with parallel parking so higher costs.

Capacity: Limiting factor for wastewater treatment plant (300K capacity but maxed out at 250K) is infiltration beds. Is reason for capital fund. Expansion can be bettered to new customers. Plant due for 20-year evaluation, should be part of any proposed West Acton expansion; will entail replacement of old equipment—pumps/electrical, not pipes which can last decades—and upsizing for expansion and locations for discharge.

Police details, paving: portion can be bettered. Need to decide how to allocate expansion costs among residential and commercial properties, and between existing and new customers.

School District campus: should be able to do estimate based on enrollment.

Public Comments:

Terra Friedrichs wanted to see numbers on need for sewers, alleged Woodard & Curran previously said no need for sewers. Wanted to see larger area with dots (indicating failed

systems). Asked if current remaining capacity would make expansion difficult. Said committee needed to keep in mind potential expanded need in Kelley's Corner.

Kurt Marden asked whether dots indicated failed systems/breakout or failure of Title testing. Asked why revisiting sewerage of West Acton but not Spencer-Tuttle-Flint neighborhood. Answer: Separate project. 200 properties potentially in West Acton? Answer: mixed properties. Looks as if project cost will be borne by smaller user base. Answer: smaller project.

Adjournment ~9:10 p.m.

- Janet Adachi, clerk for meeting