

West Acton Sewer Action Advisory Committee  
May 30, 2019, 7:00 p.m.  
Acton Town Hall, Room 9

Minutes

Present: Committee members David Martin, Chairman; Joanne Bissetta, Garry McCarthy, Samuel Rice; Peter Henry, David Wellinghoff, Town Engineer Paul Campbell;

Absent: Committee members Jon Cappetta, J. D. Head, Ann Chang

Visitors: Jack Troidl, Woodard & Curran; Leo Fotchman; Cheryl Ryan

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David Martin called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m to begin the meeting.

Regular Business

*Agenda Item #1 - Public Comments/Questions*

- The committee should create a flyer to address the misinformation that has been discussed among the public
- There was a question regarding whether #332 and #350 Arlington Street will be included in the sewer project area. Mr. Campbell discussed the project limits during discussion of the preliminary design (agenda item #6)

*Agenda Item #2 – Review of meeting minutes*

Approval of 4/11/2019 minutes. Mr. Rice moved to approve the minutes, Mr. Henry seconded, approved unanimously by voice vote.

*Agenda Item #3 – Comments from the Chair*

Mr. Martin attended the School Building Committee meeting and reported that the twin-school project sought a variance from the local Board of Health to have a septic system approved locally. The Board of Health, citing the over 10,000 gallon per day design flow, required the project to obtain approval from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Mr. Martin also noted that it was discussed at the meeting that utilities of any kind, including on-site waste water systems, are not reimbursable through the MSBA.

New/Special Business

*Agenda Item #4 – WASAAC organization discussion*

A reorganization of the committee was discussed. Mr. Martin recommended that the committee vote for a vice chair position but no action was taken at this meeting

*Agenda Item #5 – Discussion of topics raised at previous meeting April 11, 2019*

Mr. Campbell addressed a question which came up previously on whether empty lots are assessed a sewer betterment. Mr. Campbell stated that a legal, conforming lot per Acton's Zoning dimensional requirements would be assessed a sewer betterment per the Acton Sewer Bylaw. An empty lot on a conforming lot presumably has not been developed due to the lack of an on-site wastewater option (i.e. the lot doesn't "perc"). The addition of sewer "betters" the property therefore it would be subject to a sewer betterment.

Mr. Campbell went on to say that a lot that is not "buildable" would not be subject to a sewer betterment. The parcel in question (10 Wright Terrace F2-A-40), brought up at the previous meeting, is a residential parcel that does not conform to the dimensional zoning requirements for its zoning district and is therefore not subject to a sewer betterment since a residence can't be built on the parcel. A process of evaluating parcels will occur during the assessment portion of the project. Mr. Campbell stated that property owners will have the opportunity to contest the assessment if the owner believes that the parcel is not buildable or otherwise subject to a sewer betterment.

Mr. Martin asked how the effect of zoning allowing accessory apartments would affect the sewer assessment. Mr. Campbell responded by saying that existing accessory apartments would be assessed per the Sewer Bylaw for multi-family housing.

*Agenda Item #6 – Sewer survey & preliminary design discussion*

Mr. Campbell discussed the sewer survey and preliminary sewer design.

Following up on the WASAAC committee's recommendation to the Town Manager to begin the survey and design as soon as feasible, Mr. Campbell updated the Board Of Selectmen/Sewer Commissioners on the project at their April 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting. The Selectmen voted to begin the survey and design as soon as possible. The Acton Water District (sharing in the cost of the survey) and the Town entered into an agreement with Woodard & Curran at the end of April and early-May respectively.

Mr. Troidl discussed the timeline for the survey and preliminary design.

- An aerial flyover was conducted in March/April and is currently being processed. It's expected to be completed in June
- Wetland flagging will begin in June/July. Mr. Troidl recommended that the Town notify the public prior to the flagging occurring.
- A ground survey is expected to take place in July and August.
- Geotechnical probes for ledge is expected to take place in the early summer. Probes won't occur on Mass Ave since the road is a state road requiring MassDOT permission.
- Upon completion of the survey, Mr. Troidl anticipates working on the preliminary design during the late-summer and fall. He expects to have a preliminary design completed mid-fall. The preliminary design will evaluate the sewer extents, costs and community needs.

There was a question of Mr. Troidl asking if the individual homes in the sewer area will be surveyed. Mr. Troidl explained that yes, the sill elevation for each home is measured for the design. It was asked if there will be a cost estimate available for Town Meeting and Mr. Troidl stated that there will be. Finally, it was asked if the Town will be applying for SRF (state revolving fund) funding in August. Mr. Troidl stated that they will be applying on behalf of the Town, as they have in previous years.

Mr. Martin asked if a proposed development on Powdermill affects overall capacity of the sewer system. Mr. Campbell said that it does, however the applicant for the development has agreed to provide mitigation for their impact on capacity. Mr. Martin stated that the Acton Water District has identified a trend in lower water usage in town and he asked if the Town's calculation of sewer capacity reflects lower water demand. Mr. Troidl answered that their capacity analysis does.

Ms. Bissetta asked if there was an update on the twin-school project timeline. Mr. Campbell discussed a meeting that the AB School District team had with Town Staff regarding the twin-school project at Gates. The District's representatives provided the following information related to their potential use of sewer per Mr. Campbell's recollection:

- They will be filing an ANRAD to determine wetlands and other areas under jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission within the next month or so.
- The project is planned for 990 students and 130 preschool students.
- The project is planned to be net-zero with some reuse of water.
- The project anticipates having a pricing set in June or July.
- They anticipate providing a schematic design to the MSBA by September 10, 2019 where it will take six weeks to review. The list of reimbursable items would be determined by MSBA as part of their review.
- The project team anticipates a Special Town Meeting vote in December 2019. Once approved by both communities, they will be in a design-development phase of the project.
- The earliest permit from the Town is anticipated in September 2020.
- The AB project requires a wastewater option by August 2020.
- Regarding an on-site wastewater option for the twin-school project:
  - The project team anticipates a design flow of over 10,000 gallons per day (GPD).
  - The Health Department referred the project team to DEP.
  - DEP stated that the project would require a waiver to keep the project under 10,000 GPD.
  - A project over 10,000 GPD or located within Zones 1-3 of the Acton Groundwater Protection Zone may require a treatment plant. Projects not meeting those criteria may only require a septic system.
  - The project team is confident that they will be able to obtain the required waivers from DEP to keep the project under 10,000 GPD and locate a system outside of Zones 1-3.
  - The project team anticipates conducting test pits the week of the meeting (5/22).

Mr. Campbell explained to the committee that he discussed a potential method of determining the AB District's potential avoided cost for connecting to the sewer project. Since the twin-school project would require a wastewater option should the West Acton sewer project not

proceed, he recommended to the District that they obtain the necessary permits, approvals and waivers from DEP and local authorities (Board of Health, etc). With an approved plan, MSBA would presumably require the District to have it constructed by a qualified contractor via a public bid process similar to Chapter 30 municipal construction projects. Should the sewer project proceed, the AB District's avoided cost would be equal to the bid price since this would be the cost that the AB District would avoid paying by connecting to sewer.

There were several questions asked by the committee related to the twin-school project:

- If the twin-school projects goes through with the expense of designing an on-site system, what incentive or need would have they have to connect to sewer? Why does the District need to design for something on-site?
  - Mr. Campbell believes there is an advantage for the District to avoid long-term maintenance of an on-site system. Avoiding building an on-site system would also free space on the site that otherwise would dedicated to a wastewater system.
  - Mr. Martin stated that MSBA requires the District to have all local approvals in place in order to provide funding. In the event that the West Acton sewer project does not pass at Town Meeting, it would affect their project without a contingency.
- What does it mean for the twin-school project to be “net zero”?
  - Mr. Martin responded that the net zero mostly relates to power use.
- Could the twin-school's avoided costs be reduced if both projects go forward?
  - Mr. Campbell stated that the Town could decide to reduce the District's avoided cost if they choose to do so. Since the total cost of the West Acton sewer project would be fixed, the reduced fee for the District can either be borne by the Town (i.e. general tax payers), the West Acton sewer users or a combination of both.
- When is the District expecting a cost estimate for the twin-school project?
  - Mr. Martin stated that a cost estimate will be provided to MSBA by September.
- Would the West Acton sewer project go to Special Town Meeting if there is one in December?
  - Mr. Campbell recommended that yes, if the twin-school project requires a wastewater option by August 2020, approval for the design and construction of a phased West Acton project should occur at Special Town Meeting.

Additional ideas for potential public outreach over the summer and fall were discussed. Lastly, Mr. Campbell presented a plan of the conceptual sewer area which displayed the conceptual sewer area that has been discussed to-date and the various areas for which the sewer area could potentially extend to. . Mr. Campbell explained each potential area, the design constraints and the public interest/demand to extend sewer to those areas.

#### *Agenda Item #7 – Potential future schedule & topics discussion*

Mr. Campbell and Mr. Troidl discussed a potential phased sewer project that could provide the twin-school project with a wastewater option by August 2020. The first phase of the project would be a force main sewer connecting the school to the existing sewer system via Mass Ave and Spruce Street. The second phase would be the remaining project.

Mr. Martin asked if the capacity of the force main planned for Mass Ave would be sized appropriately to handle the additional areas outlined in Mr. Campbell's map of the potential sewer extents. Mr. Troidl and Mr. Rice explained that the system is "supersized" to account for future capacity. Mr. Campbell explained that this additional cost to "supersize" the system is accounted for within the Town's General Benefit.

Mr. Martin asked if the Acton Water District had an estimate for what their expected flow would be from their property at the Boxborough line. Mr. Campbell stated that he did not know. Mr. Troidl stated that the flows from their existing connection at the District's South Acton facility have been far less than anticipated.

The Committee discussed potential dates for future meetings. It was agreed to keep the schedule of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month. The Committee also discussed what the size of the committee could be in the future and whether full members could be made into associate members to better provide a quorum for future meetings.

After discussing the agenda items, a motion to end the meeting was made by Ms. Bisstta, seconded by Mr. Rice and approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Paul Campbell, clerk for meeting

#### Documents Discussed

- Draft minutes, 4/11/2019
- West Acton Sewer Project Area & Constraints.pdf
- Parcel F2-A-40 GIS Map, Assessor Card & Registry Plan 3058C

Discussed documents and other material for the 5/30/2019 meeting available on Town of Acton website at:

<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-9473>