

West Acton Sewer Action Advisory Committee
October 12, 2107, 7:00 p.m.
Acton Town Hall, Room 9

Meeting Minutes

Present: Committee members Janet Adachi, Chairman; Joanne Bissetta, Ann Chang, J.D. Head, Peter Henry, Garry McCarthy, Samuel Rice, David Wellinghoff; Town Engineer Paul Campbell; Joseph Shea, Senior V.P. and Jack Troidl, Project Manager, Woodard & Curran.

Absent: Committee member Bharat Shah

Visitors: Kurt Marden

Chairman called meeting to order shortly after 7:00 p.m. Committee members, Town Engineer and Woodard & Curran representatives introduced themselves. Chairman briefly reviewed committee charge, which provides that committee's role is to determine feasibility of sewerage in West Acton based on evaluation of various factors.

Messrs. Shea and Troidl did slide presentation on history of sewerage in Acton, including:

- 1945 recommendations for sewer system
- 1966 purchase of Adams Street parcel
- 1998 20-year loan for 22M @2%
- 2002 connection of AB on Mass. Ave.
- 2004, 2006 Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan (CWRMP)
- 2019-2020 evaluation of wastewater treatment plant, which has 20-year life

Sewer betterment fees: early users don't pay heavier burden to benefit of future users; each user pays fair share.

Consideration of sewerage encompasses 3 components: planning/outreach; design/construction; operations/management.

CWRMP entailed review of Health Dept records re failed septic systems and evaluation of pros/cons of sewerage v. septic. Identified 15 needs areas in Acton. Fort Pond project (phosphorus, nitrogen problems) and AB campus, which had consent decree and needed to get off failing septic, covered areas 5-8; West Acton is area 12. Recommendations indicated where sewerage, cluster system with common leaching area, or waste-management district would be better. Focus was on environmental impact, not economic factors.

Adams Street wastewater treatment plan handles average of 300K gallons per day, can go up to 500K but not as constant flow. Treatment is in batches. Discharge to open sand bed. Ground infiltration is what limits ongoing capacity to 300K gpd rather than 500K gpd. MA Dept of Environment Protection originally limited capacity to 250K gpd but

increased to 300K after several years of operation. Groundwater discharge permit from DEP. 11 sewer pump stations. 25M capital costs for sewerage, treatment plant, paving. Annual operating cost 560K, paid by ratepayers.

Acton chose non-mandatory connection approach. Issued waivers to some properties with failing septic, conditioned on properties hooking up to sewers, so AB and residences with failing systems were in sewer system early.

Available capacity: assuming West Acton would use 26K gpd, 42K gpd would remain. Tracking of daily flow indicates 12-14K gpd drop during summer vacation; 3/2010 spike due to heavy rains/flooding, w/residents pumping out basement into sewer system. West Acton estimate includes school campus. Still very conceptual. Water-usage records X 2. 110 gpd projected per bedroom = 300 gpd projected for standard house; 15 years of actuals indicate much lower 180-190 gpd, so projections conservative. Sewers tight so not much infiltration but still need to control stormwater, etc.

Evaluation of plant for 20-year renewal will start in 2019. Identify what needs to be tuned up, maybe recommend 3-4M for improvements by 2021.

West Acton encompasses 700+ properties, 15% of Acton, including schools, commercial center. Hookup would be via Mass. Ave. or Central. Challenges: railroad track, Fort Pond Brook. Gravity-fed sewer pipes: 20' down with pump stations for any uphill climbs; low-pressure sewer pipes: 5-6' down, smaller diameter with grinder pumps.

Considerations for routing:

- large users, such as schools
- denser zoning: more users so more cost-effective
- natural topography
- available capacity
- environmental benefits. Including cleaning up failing systems. Not just septic backup but sandy soil that moves effluent directly to estuaries
- economic development. Commercial base helps with cost.

Lessons learned from past sewerage efforts:

- 1) public outreach must be constant
- 2) design will change
- 3) account for contingencies, cost escalation
- 4) project efficiencies, for example, with Water District, utilities
- 5) financial models for costs are key. Acton sewerage approach places costs on users, other than for paving, contaminant cleanup, supersizing. Prior betterment cost, residential: 12,311; today 18-24K range.

MA State Revolving Fund loan program schedule: 19-month process starting in August, 30-year term.

August: apply

December: learn if on list

April: Town Meeting vote re proposed design, construction loan
July: funding available
October: design to DEP
January: design approval
March: out to bid, with reimbursement after construction starts.

Next meetings: Committee members would like to see map with routes on which 26K
gpd based. Agreement on second Tuesday of every month as regular meeting day.

- Janet Adachi, clerk for meeting