

West Cornwall Septic Study Group
February 11, 2016 2016
5pm Ian Ingersoll's Shop in West Cornwall

Members Present: Richard Griggs (RG), Ian Ingersoll (II), Libby Mitchell (LM), Priscilla Pavel (PP), Todd Piker (TP), and Joanne Wojtusiak (JW). Also present Ex Officio Members: Gordon Ridgway (GR) and Richard Bramley (RB).

Absent: David Dolinsky (DD), Jack Preston (JP), Josh Tyson (JT)

Also attending: Dusty McMahan from Goman & York, Karen Bartomioli and Tom Canellakis.

The meeting was called to order at 5:10pm by TP.

TP asked for a motion to approve Minutes from the 1/8/16 meeting; motion by PP and seconded by II and approved unanimously.

Communications Received:

- TP presented JT's email suggesting the idea that consideration be given to extending any septic system across the Housatonic while the covered bridge is undergoing maintenance repairs proposed by the CT DOT during 2017. GR explained that the proposed work is on the abutments and re-plating the floor. After some discussion there was agreement that the idea of extending the system across the Housatonic to serve homes and businesses in Sharon was an "interesting concept", but there was concern that the committee did not want to 'gum up the works' and that any contact with Sharon officials should be at a later stage. GR urged group to focus and Dusty McMahan stressed the need to avoid "scope creep".
- LM read a letter from Barbara Farnsworth recounting the long history of efforts to improve the septic system in WC over the past 38 years she has had her business in town. She called the septic issue the most important issue facing the town and while she expressed support she was not overly optimistic.

Introductions:

- Dusty McMahan from Goman & York (G&Y). Dusty had been a facilitator during the Economic Summit. TP polled the group and found that everyone had attended at least one of the G&Y conducted sessions. Dusty explained his presence as a resource to help the committee by facilitating contacts and leveraging G&Y's experience in working with other municipalities.
- Tom Canellakis, Yelping Hill resident who has returned to Cornwall after working nearly 30 years in China working on quality and operational improvements. He said his experience has taught him that creating a strategy and agreeing on your purpose is critical and that tasks, roles and goals flow easily once that is done.

TP stressed that our work is not a new idea, but still it is important not appear to be steam rolling a solution and that public input and buy-in is essential

TP referred to the Ann Straut (CT Bureau of Water Protection & Land Reuse) 1/15/16 email and asked how we could move forward on the QBS (Quality Based Selection) process she outlined. LM raised a question about the seemingly irrational process that prohibits any cost considerations until late in the process. The observation was made that this process (which puts cost consideration last in the process) may in fact be part of the reason the State is in the financial difficulty it is in. However, it was acknowledged that we are not going to be able to change that so it is best just to follow the QBS requirements when applying for grant monies that could cover 55% of the cost of a Phase 1 study. Dusty McMahan said that G&Y could help us with the QBS requirements.

GR then pointed out some good news: the Town has applied for a Responsible Growth grant (from CT DOT) that could reimburse up to 95% of expenditures; he also said he had contacted USDA after learning that they can provide grants covering up to 75% of costs as well as provide low cost loans such as the one recently granted to the Sharon-Salisbury Transfer Station project and, earlier, to a wastewater system for the town of Kent. GR said he would look into whether they used the QBS system in their grant making process.

TP asked the group to think about the criteria we want to have for any investment we suggest. There were two clear foci: assist/encourage economic development and ensure the health of the Housatonic. There was talk about the concept of HBU – highest and best use – what this is for WC needs to be defined. II reminded the group that the Town Plan says we want West Cornwall to remain a commercial center.

After Dusty McMahan spoke about the idea of getting the BOS, EDC and other appropriate town board members together to develop use allowances and capacity estimates, JW raised concerns about not having gotten sufficient citizen buy-in yet. RB spoke to concerns of those who live in WC and may feel no need to hook up to a public septic system as well as those do not live in WC and said we need to know more about their willingness to support expenditures for a WC septic system.

GR reminded everyone that we have insufficient data right now and there is lots of work to be done. TP said there are really a number of concurrent activities that need to take place. II said he has already been gathering data from business and residential property owners in WC about the status of their septic/water systems and that information will be shared with prospective bidders. Dusty pointed out that the cross access issues (septic and water that is accessed from adjoining properties) in WC is a rather unique situation that will be an important consideration for bidders to consider.

The Committee agreed to review the McBroom & Malone (MMI) Project Understanding & Approach document to draft a RPI (Request for Information) package which will be sent to 4 firms: MMI, Cardinal, Fuss & O'Neal and the firm that did the septic system at Salisbury School. They will be invited to conduct an on-site visit to WC and II has agreed to escort them around town. They will then be asked to present their relevant experience and suggested first step options at our next meeting. The Committee felt that hearing the 4 different firms would enable them to draw the best from each to create a final set of criteria (which would address residential, commercial, environmental and tourist issues) which the firms would then be asked to address by submitting a formal written proposal.

Motion by PP and seconded by II to name a sub-committee (LM,TP,JW) to draft the letter and revised map and mail it to 4 identified firms noted above; passed unanimously.

The next meeting date was changed to Tuesday, March 8th at 5pm. Motion to do so was made by PP, seconded by TP and agreed to unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanne Wojtusiak
Secretary