

West Cornwall Water/Septic Study Group

January 9, 2018 2017 at 5PM at
The Hughes Library in West Cornwall

Members Present: David Dolinsky (DD), Ian Ingersoll (II), Libby Mitchell (LM), Priscilla Pavel (PP), Todd Piker (TP) and Joanne Wojtusiak (JW); Absent: Richard Griggs (RG), Also present Ex Officio Members: Gordon Ridgway (GR) and Richard Bramley (RB). There was a large public turnout.

TP called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

A motion to accept the Minutes from the December 12, 2017 meeting was made by PP and seconded by LM and passed unanimously.

TP welcomed attendees and thanked them for coming. He noted that despite repeated efforts by himself and WMC they had not been successful in getting any regulators (TAHD, DPH or DEEP) to the meeting; continuing efforts will be made.

TP directed email correspondence he had distributed to Committee members be made available to the public and then read aloud a letter from WC homeowner Megan Wilson.

JW asked if \$7,493.24 balance from the original grant could be used to pay for a second opinion that would look at the WMC recommendation. She expressed concern about her own ability to understand/evaluate the technical information including the specifics of the allowable contaminants in any water discharged into the Housatonic. No clear answer was stated.

GR said that he had driven around WC with Steve McDonnell from WMC while Steve was in the area. They looked at possible alternative sites including Trinity property, a wooded area north of the village that, like The Bend property, is owned by CLP/Eversource. GR was asked if they had viewed/considered the town owned property used for tree and leaf disposal; GR said they had not. WC property owner Stephen Hart noted that he owns 10 acres "up the hill" (east) of WC village and that no one has contacted him about the possibility of using this property for the system. He noted that his land has some flat area that might work for the installation of an underground dispersal system.

TP asked for comments/questions/ concerns from audience members. While concerns about the visibility of the structures related to the proposed system were raised, it was clear that concerns about "visibility" were not key, but rather the primary concern is about the location of the septic system in a quiet residential area . While several audience members expressed support for the idea of a septic system in West Cornwall, no one spoke in favor of locating the system at The Bend site.

It became clear during the discussion that while there will obviously be a need to determine the cost for the town and impacted homeowners both at the initial construction stage and on an on-going basis, the thing the Study Group needs to do first, is to find a suitable and acceptable site for this or any other proposed system .

TP noted that the 2010 POCAD stated that WC is one of the two (Cornwall Bridge being the other) commercial centers in the town. He reminded those present that 7 years ago, the wider Cornwall community had strongly endorsed WC as a commercial center and that a viable septic system is a necessary part of achieving that goal.

River Commission member and WC property owner Lynn Fowler spoke about her concerns regarding discharges into the Housatonic. (TP read the email from Rowland Denny from DEEP detailing allowable rates of discharges.) Fowler noted that despite Barton Jones support for the project, the fact is that this project has not been endorsed or even discussed at an official River Commission meeting. TP said it would be helpful to hear more from the River Commission.

Judy Herkimer asked about the availability of a final Final Report that included responses to comments raised by Amanda Clark from the CT Department of Health. Herkimer asked that both hard copy and electronic copies be made available. TP said he will check on this. She also noted that the Study Group should keep in mind that if discharges are made into the Housatonic then we will have to go through the federal permitting process which is both expensive and time consuming.

TP asked GR about what the next steps might be with the Board of Finance. GR said there is a ways to go before the Group's work is what he would call a "mature project" ready to be endorsed by the BOS and then considered by the Board of Finance.

JW suggested the idea of a town-wide poll , but the feeling was that the public does not have enough information. DD suggested that the Cornwall Chronicle should not be the sole source of information about the project and noted the 2 letters to the editor opposing the project. JW suggested that the Study Group could/should be doing a better job of communicating its story.

TP thanked all for coming out and reminded them that our next meeting will be February 13th at 5pm at the same location. Motion to adjourn at 6:15 PM by LM and seconded by II and passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanne Wojtusiak