

MEETING

West Cornwall Water/Septic Study Group

September 12, 2017 at 5pm at Ian Ingersoll's Shop in West Cornwall

Members Present: David Dolinsky (DD); Richard Griggs (RG), Ian Ingersoll (II), Libby Mitchell (LM), Priscilla Pavel (PP), Todd Piker (TP) and Joanne Wojtusiak (JP) Absent: None; also present Ex Officio Member: Gordon Ridgway (GR).

The meeting was called to order by TP at 5:00pm

Community members attending: Bart Jones (representing the River Commission), Jocelyn Ayer (representing the Northwest Council of Governments) Dusty Blass, Jill Cutler (representing The Chronicle), Karen Griswald-Nelson (Cornwall's ZEO) and Steve McDonnell and John Wengell from WMC Consulting Engineers.

Minutes from the May 9th meeting were accepted as corrected. The vote was unanimous.

TP presented and read aloud correspondence from WC resident Mark Wilson; he also read his response into the record. TP acknowledged JW's email to Rep. Ohler. Copies of all 3 emails are attached to these minutes.

TP asked the committee members to bring up issues/topics that they believed were incorrect or unclear. Listed below are a number of the items raised:

It was noted that the Housatonic River has been granted "wild & scenic" designation by the State of CT and the federal designation is pending according to Bart Jones.

The map on p.30 is of CB not WC

Need to add language that addresses those buildings that presently have no septic systems

Need to add language that explains that land in floodplains make permeability tests irrelevant

Expand explanation of so-called Bend property (presently owned by Eversource) and show that parts of it are in the floodplain, but some of it is outside it. II indicated that the part outside the floodplain is opposite his workshop while the other parts are across from residential properties.

II urged the use of language that focuses on economic viability (saving the town) seeing that as a more powerful motivator than simply cleaning up the river.

Suggestion was made that stormwater considerations, while important, not be made a part of this study.

Make it clear that addressing public water issue will not solve the septic issue in WC

Be sure that WMC understands that concern for unbridled growth as a result of resolving septic issues is not a concern in WC

Strengthen language in the Executive Summary to emphasize that present septic situation places limitations on property owners and the economic viability of West Cornwall. Jocelyn Ayer offered to help re-write this.

It was agreed that Table 6 will be revised to reduce the size of the Base Area and that the stats for the Base Area will be presented in one chart with the “add-on” areas included in a separate chart.

MOTION by DD and seconded by PP: WMC will proceed, as quickly as possible, to conduct groundwater investigations within the existing budget. Passed unanimously.

There were a number of specific additional points which will be incorporated into the next draft.

TP urged WMC to incorporate the many suggestions and corrections into a revised draft asap.

TP then read a list of 10 goals the Committee had and reviewed them in light of the tasks that WMC and the Committee have done. We found a strong alignment!

TP said that after nearly 2 hours we would end the meeting without finishing the planned agenda; there were no objections. After some discussion, it was agreed that we would encourage public attendance at our next regularly scheduled meeting set for October 10th; the meeting will be held at Town Hall to accommodate an expected large turn-out.

RG suggested using the CCN to encourage attendance and said he would help do this. A letter/invitation will also be sent to The Chronicle.

A Town Meeting will be set for November. The final report must be submitted by November 30th to meet USDA and DEEP grant guidelines.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanne Wojtusiak
Secretary

CORRESPONDENCE

On Mon, Sep 11, 2017 at 4:22 PM, <mark@mgwilson.com> wrote:

Hi Todd,

Unfortunately, I am out of town and unable to attend your meeting tomorrow about the Septic Study.

I received a copy of the report this morning. While I have not carefully read the entire report, I would like to point out that your agenda for the meeting includes “fact checking.”

I find it strange that the WMC Engineering group claims that they have interviewed and contacted homeowners about the nature of their existing septic systems. Supposedly they were meeting with individual homeowners on Saturday, May 13th, 2017. I was home all day on May 13th and they never contacted or interviewed me. I asked a number of my neighbors on River Road and in West Cornwall, if they had been contacted by WMC. They all said they had not been contacted. Did WMC contact anyone about their septic systems? On page 6 of their report entitled "Existing Conditions," they claim to have conducted site visits and interviews. I suggest that this assertion is highly misleading.

West Cornwall is a very small community. Approximately 45 to 50 properties are affected by this study. I find it extraordinary that WMC Engineering failed to contact homeowners about their septic systems. If this study is objective and accurate, then I suggest that your study get realistic evaluations about the nature of existing septic systems. Facts are essential before the town embarks on an expensive, disruptive, and most likely, unnecessary septic system.

Very truly yours,

Mark Wilson

18 River Road

West Cornwall, CT 06796

Todd Piker replied via email that same evening

Hello Mark:

As you can see I am cc'ing the rest of the Water/Septic Study Group to include them in both your comments and my response. Rest assured your email will be read into the minutes as part of the Communications segment of our meeting and as a result will become Public Record. I welcome the opportunity to read your thoughts and hope that others with similar sentiments might be in attendance so that we all may take part in a lively exchange of ideas and opinions. At the end of the day, whether we move forward with a community septic system or not, it is imperative we all keep an open mind and a respectful interest in how our neighbors feel. This study, although imperfect, is a step in the direction of identifying a baseline based on fact to use when assessing options that would require consensus to implement. Thanks for your understanding and vigilance.

Best

Todd

On September 11th at 11:17am Joanne Wojtusiak sent this email to Rep. Brian Ohler and cc'd the WC Septic Committee

Dear Brian,

I am a member of the WC Septic Study Group that was appointed by the Board of Selectmen. As we discussed at the Cornwall Ag Fair, I have attached the Draft Report from WMC, the engineering firm we retained to help our town find

a solution to West Cornwall's septic issues

While the WC Septic Committee has just begun its discussions, I wanted to bring to your attention the "Note" on page 10 that states that one of the options would allow for a 50% reduction in leach field area – if the installation was done in NY or Massachusetts. We were told that the Connecticut DEEP has said they do not have the staff to evaluate this option so it is impossible to take advantage of this option.

While I have no idea whether this option would be the one that Cornwall would choose, it seems that it would make sense to

have the CT DEEP simply accept the experience of our two adjoining states and permit this option in Connecticut! And considering the fiscal constraints that are facing Connecticut, taking advantage of the experience of other states would seem particularly appropriate.

I would suggest that you and Sen. Miner contact Steve McDonnell, partner at WMC – Wengell, McDonnell & Costello – at 860-667-9624 to gain an expert's perspective on this issue.

Thank you for your service in the Legislature during this difficult period in Connecticut.

Best.



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