

Wolcott Wastewater Committee
Meeting Minutes
August 12, 2019

Committee Members: Eric Furs, Linda Martin, Bruce Wheeler, Jim Ryan, Jim Mahoney,

Guests: Seth Jensen (LCPC), Amy Macrellis, J.B. Hines (Birchline Planning), Mary Clark (VT DEC), Jacks (CAT)

Meeting Summary: Jim M. stated that the Committee seems to be going in a good direction and that a Chair should be appointed at the next meeting. The Committee agreed to add “Election of Officers” to the agenda for the September meeting.

Amy M. provided an overview of the flow requirements for septic systems. Flow is measured in “gallons per day” (gpd). A residential system needs to be designed for at least two bedrooms with two people, which would have a flow of 280 gpd per day. Additional bedrooms increase the gpd. There is a slight flow reduction for systems serving five or more houses because it is assumed that, on average, not everyone will be doing laundry, dishwashing, long showers at the same time. At ~20 houses, flows are reduced to 245 gpd per home, regardless of number of bedrooms.

For commercial and other nonresidential uses, flow depends on the use. For example, a use such as a dry goods store or retail office has a relatively small flow (15 gpd/employee/shift). The same system designed for a two bedroom home could support a 10-15 employee office. Jim M. noted that there are other requirements, such as public safety, that need to be met to convert a home into an office. Amy M. stated that other uses, such as doctors’ offices, require significantly more flow. Restaurants generally have a larger gpd requirement than a residential use, unless they have a very small number of tables or are primarily takeout. Businesses that generate high strength effluent such as breweries need to provide pre-treatment before discharging into a leach field or mound system.

Amy M. stated that once a system has 6,500 gpd or more the “Indirect Discharge Rules” apply. The IDR’s have monitoring and testing and other requirements which increase operating costs. Jim Ryan asked if there was an “optimum” size for the small “cluster” systems discussed at the last meeting. Seth stated that over five houses but under 6,500 gpd would allow the flow reductions without the additional IDR costs.

Mary C. stated that, depending on the uses, Bucks could be redeveloped with uses that would not trigger the IDR rules. Jim M. stated that it was unlikely the Bucks property would contain high flow uses. Offices and retail were much more likely.

Amy M. provided an overview of the isolation distances for on-site replacement systems. The small lots and proximity to the Lamoille River create a challenge for on-site replacement areas in much of Wolcott Village. Well shields are another challenge. Linda M. stated that the Town

office shares a spring with six houses. There is also a shared well for the post office, the old Town Hall (Ballet Wolcott), and a few neighboring housings. The wells for the School and the store meet the thresholds to be considered a “public system.”

The Committee reviewed maps from 2005. Mary C. noted that there have been two major changes to State Wastewater Rules since 2005, so some of the information on the maps will need to be updated. The Committee reviewed potential sites with suitable and moderately suitable soils close to the Village. Jim M. noted that distance is a major driver of cost due to the need to lay pipes, so the Committee should be open to mound systems closer to the Village. Amy M. noted that mound systems do not require a replacement area under the Rules.

Several potential sites seem to be worth exploring, including a parcel owned by AOT and the fields near the Grimes gravel pit. Eric F. stated that he could reach out to AOT to gauge its willingness to work with Town. The School also appears to have favorable soils and room to expand, though it is a greater distance from the Village.

The Committee discussed public outreach and agreed that there is a need to balance keeping the public informed with releasing incomplete information prematurely. The Committee asked Seth to develop a public outreach strategy for review at the September meeting.

J.B. H. provided a presentation on the Waitsfield Community Wastewater Loan program. The loan program was developed after several bonds for a wastewater system failed. A major impetus for the program was the loss of several major businesses, such as Mad River Canoe. Lack of wastewater infrastructure was a major barrier to businesses locating and expanding in the Mad River Valley. The program has provided loans for wastewater systems which have enabled several businesses, such as Lawson’s Finest, the Mad River Food Hub, and LocalFolk Smoke House, to locate or expand in the Committee community. The program functions as a pass through from the Town to the property owner and involves a 20 year 2.5% interest loan and a 15% subsidy for the capital cost. The loan also includes 1 year of payments in an escrow account to protect the Town in the event of non-payment.

Jim M. noted that Wolcott does not have the administrative capacity to manage a program such as this locally. J.B. stated that Waitsfield has a very small staff and that the RPC or other entity may be able to assist with some of the administrative costs. Seth noted that the recent inter-municipal services legislation could potentially enable this, if the Town desired. Jim M. also noted that a 20 year repayment period would be challenging for many residents of the Village. Cost is a major factor, and many residents cannot afford additional costs. The cost of major home repairs push many people to default on existing mortgages.

Jim Ryan asked about the cost of pre-treatment. Mary C. stated that it is site dependent and should be looked at when evaluating different sites. J.B. stated that one of the major benefits of developing a wastewater system is the flexibility for types of uses.

Amy M. provided a brief overview of the existing system serving the Town Office. The system is permitted for ~1,200 gpd. Amy M. stated that the system is located in the floodplain, so it is likely that it could not be further expanded. However, since the Town Office uses significantly

less than the permitted capacity, the remaining capacity could allow more uses in the old Train Station or Old School House. Jim Ryan noted that some of that capacity could also be used for one or two of the neighboring homes.

Amy M. stated that the wastewater system at the school is permitted for 24,000 gpd and is located on OK soils. Eric F. stated that there are 126 students currently at the school. There could be the potential for the system to be expanded to serve more of the Village, though distance is a major factor. J.B. noted that this is similar to the Warren experience in which the school system was expanded to serve the Pitcher Inn, and then again to serve the entire Village.

Items for next meeting:

- Review/Update Maps
- Public Outreach Strategy
- Outreach to Site Landowners (AOT, Grimes, School District)
- Information on wastewater user fees for other communities in the area, cost of replacement systems, etc
- Grand List Data for the Village.