

Wastewater Task Force Meeting – September 2, 2008

DRAFT

Attendees:

Alan Cathcart
Paul Mahoney
Elena Proakis-Ellis
Marcia Rasmussen
Richard Reine

Regroup after Public Outreach Meeting

A discussion took place on the deliverable of the task force. A warrant article was discussed which would ask the Town if there is consensus to build additional capacity in some volume that's acceptable and recommended from the Town Manager based on the Task Force findings to the Board of Selectmen.

Marcia suggested that we pay special attention to including conservation measures in our discussion. We haven't fully addressed what conservation does and the impact it may have. There are a large group of people out there who don't want to spend money –and people want to understand “why won't conservation work”? This should be fully addressed.

Rich stated that he looks at it as two separate efforts that eventually will converge. The first thing is to figure out what is the total volume of wastewater needed based on the planning models and outreach currently going on. Then, we can explore how we can account for that volume, through conservation along with some other alternatives.

Elena suggested that the warrant article is a way for the town to acknowledge that there is a need for “x” amount more of flow required to accommodate these planning initiatives and that we include an authorization in the article that would allow us to explore how this might be accomplished.

Alan mentioned that there are a number of planning and design phases before any costly construction would begin. The end result would require a future town meeting article before embarking on some form of construction for additional capacity, or not. Explanations and understandings that relate to wastewater alternative management strategies including grey water and groundwater recharge must be developed. He also noted that conservation initiative developed in Concord is so much further ahead than the average system that we certainly have a good starting point in which to engage in this discussion.

Rich explained that his understanding of the goal and task force's role is to go to Town Meeting with a warrant article to recommend a certain volume of wastewater to accommodate the identified needs over the next twenty years. In order to accomplish this, we must go to the next step which is an alternatives analysis. There will be many alternatives to be explored. A decision needs to be made as to how this will be paid for. A percentage of these funds might be obtained through aggressive conservation measures and ways to look at the management of wastewater on site.

Paul Mahoney stated that in the grand scheme of things the initial two issues will be that the money is not that significant to begin this process, for the initial planning level analysis. This is not designing the solution, but an analysis of what the present options are. Those dollars should not raise that big of an issue at Town Meeting. The larger issue will be "how did you get to the volume recommendation" and "why are we here today"? The history of why we are talking about this now needs to be explained. It will be an ongoing discussion about alternative means of addressing the volume probably at the next Town meeting in a few years.

Alan noted that the alternatives analysis should provide us with a better understanding of the funds involved in the pursuit of larger or smaller scale solutions.

Marcia agreed that it's really important to communicate the work that has been done this year. We need to explain the issues we were (and are) facing: integration of smart growth in the Village Centers, inclusion of affordable housing, the impact of everyone adding a bedroom, and what effect these issues have overall. If we can quantify needs over the next month through conversations with property owners who have high usage and finalize the model for redevelopment of West Concord, then extrapolate that information and apply it to Concord Center and Thoreau Street, then we will have a range of volume needed for the future. We will have October and November to begin conversations with the Selectmen, Public Works Commission, and Planning Board, to say "here is why we think we need to do something more, here is the integration of all planning concepts ... we're looking at a range of 200,000 -500,000 gallons. The next step would be to allocate funds to explore the alternatives such as what will conservation do for us, I&I, etc.

Where we are now needs to be better publicized. We have implemented very aggressive conservation measures, we have accomplished Phase I of the Wastewater Treatment Plan, we have used up or allocated the existing capacity... All of this information needs to be provided so people can engage in what's happening.

Rich suggested an approach for a warrant article in which a number for total volume needs would be identified and consensus sought so the number is not an issue that continues to prevent the Town from moving forward with an accepted plan. The deliverable of the Task Force could be a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen for an additional volume of wastewater management required to meet the Town's planning vision with the ability to implement up to the consensus volume if implementation of this

wastewater flow increase involve only modest changes, primarily permitting in nature, not requiring substantial capital investments.

The cost of the analysis could be in the \$100,000 - \$200,000 range. This may or may not have to go out as an RFQ. We'll need to confirm the procurement process with Jon Harris. This could be an amendment to the existing Weston & Sampson agreement if it's decided that it is in the best interest of the Town.

Paul Mahoney observed that we have been talking about these next steps on a Town Meeting schedule. We are almost at a point where we will be slowing down as we wait for the Town Meeting calendar to catch up to where we are. If it was appropriate to find funding for the initial analysis without going through the Town Meeting process, this might be pursued. The task force could then make a recommendation for alternative analysis, with a certain cost associated with those alternatives – and ask to proceed at that point.

Elena said that based on our experience with wastewater planning related work, even though we may have the number in November and Town Meeting is not until April, a lot would need to be done between November and April – just in preparation for Town Meeting in terms of public meetings, getting information out, and answering questions about what the flow number means. This could be a labor intensive process.

An understanding of what the volume equates to in terms of alternatives would be helpful. An example would be... if it were 400,000 gpd this would mean a new plant, if it were 200,000 gpd that might mean ground water discharge or water reuse or a combination of conservation and ground water discharge. If we have a good understanding on the nature of alternatives available, we would at least be in a position to discuss these alternatives.

Marcia stated her opinion that there may also be a legal question that comes into play. If you choose to do nothing, the Town has a responsibility to provide a certain volume of service and if people are unable to do what they want to do, there are legal ramifications. There may even be a use that we have not envisioned that we might want to be able to provide for – similar to the rezoning for Concord Park Assisted Living. A broad sense of alternatives should be considered in order to go to the preliminary design phase.

Alan expressed his observation that Concord is in support of prudent planning. When you get into the actual design phase there are generally more constraints. It is important to emphasize that the request for funds at the next Town Meeting would be for planning and alternative analysis which may result in a design and construction funding in the future.

Rich summarized the conversation saying that a fixed volume should be determined and recommended at Town Meeting. The short term solution is what we're dealing with right now by using the "capacity allowance model" to create capacity for projects which meet certain criteria and can provide a relief valve in the event of permit upset. The mid-term

solution may be a 5-10 year solution that might be at the existing treatment plant prior to building a new facility. Depending on its extent and cost, it might be more economical to forego that solution and move forward with a new plant and location to accommodate the consensus volume if the current plant can not meet this capacity demand, if that is what is determined. If planning does not occur and a do nothing alternative is chosen, the mid-term option may be driven by a federal or state consent order that we should be aware of and prepared to address (should we exceed our NPDES permit).

Marcia added that at the 2009 Town Meeting the Task Force should bring a recommended volume of wastewater and indicate that we could continue to plan for that volume. In 2010 a plan could be presented to identify how that volume could be handled. In 2011, or at some future meeting, implementation of that plan could occur.

Elena asked what the status of the West Concord analysis and extrapolation was. This information was not available at this time.

Promoting for smart growth alternatives as identified by the Town can be part of the awareness provided by the task force.

Paul Mahoney inquired as to how such alternatives would play out over a twenty year period - What would we have to do versus what we might want to do. If 600,000 gpd is the number, then should we design the system based on that volume? If it turns out to be only 400,000 gpd what would that mean?

Rich responded that the volume we're discussing relates to the volumes generated by the models that we are creating – and those models are build-out with maybe some modest changes in zoning. Then there are other influences such as Baker Avenue development and redevelopment, possible expansion at Emerson Hospital, the future use of the public schools and Concord Academy that will need to be taken into consideration.

Alan stated that the planning model run in West Concord describes a range of wastewater flow, not a single number, based upon what zoning would permit today with various build-out scenarios. Marcia suggested that even under current zoning there is a volume associated with that – even if zoning is changed to allow for different types of uses, there is a similar range.

Elena mentioned that an analysis of how long it takes people to tie-in to the sewer after its been installed in a neighborhood was completed earlier. This analysis might be referenced as a way to predict what the time period might be for Phase 1.

Rich stated that recently, relief valves have been devised for anyone who has connected to the Town's system, to this point. These relief valves have been vetted through an appeal process before the Public Works Commission. Serafina's is an example where if necessary the additional seats can be removed, there is also Title 5 onsite at some other location. Our permit is not being risked in the short-term. The consent order could be a mid-term solution while we continue to plan.

Alan expressed that if we go continue along this short-term, infill risk management approach, we are likely looking at a one or two year time-table. Phase II, III and IV may not move ahead until the larger issues have been resolved. Elena said that as we remove I&I it may be possible to proceed with Phase II because it only adds up to 5,000 gallons. Alan went on to say that long-term we are talking about significant construction costs.

For the October meeting, when the whole task force is back together, the planning models should be completed and discussions with all the high-use sewer customers will have taken place so that numbers will be tabulated. The housing piece will be part of those numbers including all 40B projects.

An estimate of costs, suggested sites, and possible timetables for the various management options can not happen until a formal alternatives analysis has been completed that looks at all these different issues. Even though this information won't be ready for the October meeting – general information could be presented. The specifics won't be available until the November meeting. Weston & Sampson will be consulted for assistance with this information. Some customers may have some creative “public-private” solutions to consider. The wastewater treatment plant at the MCI-Concord facility is something to consider when Weston & Sampson does their analysis.

Meetings need to be set up with the dozen or so high-use sewer customers, in order to obtain more detailed information and perspectives for assistance in our planning efforts. This meeting should be set up with Planning and Public Works.

It was identified that wastewater needs for the hospital are more complicated than other entities because of the nature of their business – various machines, equipment, procedures, etc.

The Task Force will need to come up with a recommendation based on information received from all the high-use sewer customers. The high-use sewer customers from ten years ago can be quantified by looking at their water use.