

Draft MINUTES
Wastewater Planning Task Force
March 4, 2008

The meeting was convened in the Selectmen's Room at the Town House on Tuesday, March 4, at 4:00 p.m. Present were Peggy Briggs, Stan Black, Jeff Wieand, Paul Mahoney, Fred Watriss, Jeff Adams, Toby Kramer, and Chris Whelan, Rich Reine, Marcia Rasmussen, Alan Cathcart and Elena Proakis Ellis.

The agenda was reviewed; Peggy Briggs outlined the process and goals. Paul Mahoney provided a Public Works perspective of the wastewater treatment capacity and constraints. He also highlighted the five questions raised in the executive summary of the December 2007 report - The Status of Municipal Wastewater Treatment in Concord, Massachusetts.

Rich Reine noted that when the December 2007 report was issued, the Town had reached its capacity of 1.2 million gal./day, based on the 12-month rolling average (which includes the recently bettered properties). He stated that any approval of additional wastewater treatment plant flows not currently included in the Towns Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP), without an appropriate relief mechanism in place, may jeopardize the federal discharge permit resulting in potential violations and consent orders.

Fred Watriss requested a list of properties that are served by sewers and those included in Phases 1 through 4. Marcia Rasmussen noted that the December 2007 report included an estimate of sewer needs if the Town were to build-out to current zoning (a need for 420,000 gallons per day of wastewater that would need to be treated by on-site septic systems or the wastewater treatment plant, a portion of which is already connected to the municipal sewer system).

Toby Kramer asked what was not included in the 2002 plan. Alan Cathcart provided some background on the prior planning effort that focused on environmental protection and being "growth neutral." He added that initial planning assumptions indicated that addressing I/I (inflow and infiltration) would remove flows to provide additional capacity, which it has to a limited extent but the science cannot achieve 100% removal and in fact the Town's system was substantially tighter than the average system resulting in less cost effective removal of I/I. He added that several large projects (95 Conant Street, Emerson Hospital, and New England Deaconess Association) used up the capacity reserved for infill that was expected to last twenty years.

Toby suggested that we need to understand how much wastewater capacity is represented by the build-out as well as municipal interests and planning interests (related to the Village Center study work), especially where we have existing sites in the villages that are ripe for change. Marcia Rasmussen suggested that we model an existing mixed use site, such as Concord Crossing, which includes a restaurant, residential, office and retail uses.

Peggy Briggs asked if this Task Force should use the Village Center Study (VCS) report as the beginning point. Fred Watriss noted that there are scenarios in the VCS report that might be considered as well. Peggy Briggs expressed concern about the economics and impacts on taxes; that developers would be driving the redevelopment of the villages. Paul Mahoney noted that the VCS report provides a preliminary vision but more public input is needed. Toby Kramer observed that the 40B process may not have the impact that was once feared, but if the Town concentrates on "Smart Growth" principles there would be a direct focus on the villages.

Rich Reine outlined a variety of options that the Town faces and what decisions about these options mean for the short, medium and long-term. Elena Proakis Ellis notes that there are future sewer connections proposed under Phases 2, 3 and 4 from the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) that may be impacted by choices being considered. Alan Cathcart observed that there is a long time frame for planning and construction that would be required if a decision was made to increase the Town's wastewater capacity.

Peggy Briggs asked who would pay for the short-term solutions and for that matter larger more capital intensive expansion and was informed that had yet to be determined. It was agreed that any of the resultant plans would necessitate serious consideration of financial planning and impacts.

Peggy Briggs noted that the Town was in support of the 2004 CWMP, but she didn't see the same support for future growth. Toby Kramer observed that contributions/funding would be required of those who need capacity. Alan Cathcart noted that the Town has a commitment for the short-term, the real investment needs to be a long-term solution. Since the Town is near capacity, the Public Works Commission is grappling with the challenges posed by those who want to expand their use by more than 1,000 gal. per day. Rich Reine added that some of these projects are in the Town's best interest, e.g., village center changes, affordable housing, and municipal needs.

Toby Kramer suggested that staff provide a list of short term questions and existing policies to help frame the work of the Task Force. Rich Reine noted that in order to bridge the gap today, the Town needs to know where it is heading. Alan Cathcart added that CPW staff is already talking to owners who are interested in expanding their service with guidance provided that they should be considering possible alternatives. Toby reiterated that she wants to understand the immediate policy issues, and the mid-term and long-term scale of each category.

Paul Mahoney noted that the Public Works Commission is focused on finding short-term solutions, but they are concerned about agreements that require someone to be removed from the system at a future date if capacity is not available. Elena Proakis Ellis noted that the current situation is based on real numbers that they've been monitoring usage.

Toby Kramer noted that it sounded like there were technical things a property owner could do such as conservation devices, new technology, sewer capacity "trading." Rich Reine stated that considerable effort occurs to identify and recommend these conservation measures on both the water and wastewater side which directly impacts treatment plant flows. The sewer capacity "trading" has been discussed internally recognizing that that administration and enforcement of such a program would have challenges. He reiterated the importance of the Task Force focusing on answering the five questions highlighted in the December 2007 study and putting numbers and quantities to the desired future growth. This would allow for development of various wastewater alternatives to be developed consistent with these long-term and short-term needs.

Toby Kramer stated that the Task Force needs to understand who could not put in an on-site septic system and examine the village centers for possible locations of shared systems. Alan Cathcart indicated that in order to plan and design for viable long-term solutions Public Works needs to know the scale of municipal wastewater capacity growth desired and where this growth is intended. Peggy Briggs noted that developers and certain property owners are already tuned into the issue; that there is very limited capacity available for growth under the current scenarios and if you have agreements with property owners then the solution relies on that property owner.

Chris Whelan commented that the Task Force may want to reach out to other stakeholder groups such as the Economic Council and housing interests to participate in the discussion.

The Task Force determined that it would meet monthly on the first Tuesday of each month at 4:00 p.m. Peggy Briggs suggested that the Town Manager utilize Town staff to move the discussion forward; that work with the consultant continue with information brought to the Task Force.

Requests and tasks for the next meeting: reflect on the five questions:

- 1) How much wastewater flow is associated with the desired development or redevelopment of areas identified in the Planned Production Housing Plan and Comprehensive Long Range Plan?
- 2) For what portion of this flow can and will the Town provide municipal wastewater management options?

- 3) In what time frame is this new, municipally-managed flow anticipated to be generated?
- 4) How will the Town fund design and construction costs associated with any future municipal wastewater management solutions?
- 5) Which areas that are currently under-serviced have the highest value to the Town in terms of sustaining continued economic growth through the redevelopment and housing production?

Fred Watriss requested data and would coordinate with Elena Proakis Ellis. Toby Kramer asked that the capacity be categorized (stores, restaurant, new building, renovation, etc.); that conservation measures be outlined; that an assessment of on-site options be provided; and, that the Concord Crossing development data be prepared (sewer capacity and uses by floor areas).

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.