

## Clean Water Committee

### First Public Hearing

April 16, 2024

**Attendees**, In person and via zoom, included:

Committee members: Clark Amadon, Jack Byrne, Jay Pilliod, Dave Westerman, Rae Washburn

Robert Clark of Otter Creek

Public (20): Jan Tierson, Bill & Mary Bozack, Travis Blodgett, Raymond Munn, Susan Werntgen, Bod Blodgett, Dara Torre, Joe Gabaree, Jack Barnes, Mike Woods, Jonathan Siegel, John Schultz, Don Wexler, Robert & Deb Sargent, Ian Donovan, Dennis Fekert, Hannah Yerks

By zoom: Emily Hackett, Achouak Arfaoui, Ellie Hilferty, Mary Fleming

### **Presentations**

**Clark Amadon** provided an overview of what to expect at this event and introduced the Committee & Robert.

- Provided a history relating to the origin and goals of the committee.
- In addition to the environmental benefits, a by product of a community wastewater system is the possibility of additional housing and commercial development.
- We contracted with Robert Clark of Otter Creek Engineering to assist us in the development of a system.
- We've been investigating an inground system, to be paid for with a large ARPA grant.

### **Robert Clark**

Robert's presentation slides are available here: [Clark – can you attached a link to his slides?]

#### Overview/Study

- Reviewed goals and areas that were prioritized as potential sites, including 1/4 mile outside of the village.
- Discussed test pits completed in 3 locations.
- There is very little suitable soil capacity for wastewater in the Village.

#### Community Infrastructure

- Benefits of community infrastructure

Discussed where we're at right now with the project.

- The Feasibility study was completed.

- The next step is preliminary engineering, although we've done some test pits.
- We still have quite a few steps to get through.

Options for systems include Direct Discharge and Indirect Discharge

Reviewed locations we considered.

Reviewed our current options:

1. No change
2. Cluster wastewater systems.
  - a. Solid waste systems on each property and a group effluent disposal system
3. Expand the radius of our investigation area and other treatment mechanisms.

Discussed an alternative approach, that has not yet been explored, that includes a Community Water System.

Funding Mechanisms

- This study is funded by a forgivable loan.
- The committee worked within an incredibly aggressive timeline.
- Even though the ARPA money might go away, the data we get now could be valuable down the road.

Discussed what our next steps are.

**Questions and comments:**

How much money has been spent on the study and if it's not forgivable how much will the town have to pay?

- A. \$35,000 has been spent to date. Everything that has been spent is reimbursable once the report is done. Emily described the mechanism. All of our expenses to date have been reimbursed.

Are the ARPA funds available to individual landowners in the village?

- A. No. The State has a separate program that allows for funding assistance for private property owners. Emily: the grant funding is income based, all of which is accompanied by low interest loans.

When this study is done, and we get to the report, does that put us to a place where 5 years from now we have our design? Where will we be when we finish the preliminary engineering report?

- A. At this point we haven't really found a reasonable option. We haven't yet found a site that makes sense.

The selectboard has the option to ask for some of the ARPA money to stay here for future use, but it's not likely that we'll get to keep the \$3.5 million.

Why are we looking to put a wastewater system in the flood-prone village?

- A. An inground system in the village is unlikely.

Regarding the Town Plan that was carried out 10 years ago, people overwhelmingly did not want to increase development in the Village. Is it appropriate to be looking further away if we've already reached the amount of development we want?

- A. What's unique about the village center is that the buildings are close together and the cost for connection infrastructure is less.

The effects of affordable housing have caused us to look at this differently. Providing some opportunity for some housing expansion and commercial development was one of the reasons why we pursued this.

Why wouldn't we look at such a system in other areas of town? What if you brought a community water source down the hill to service the village rather than explore a village wastewater system when there is a potential (and almost a certainty) that the Village will flood?

- A. The areas we were looking at for wastewater disposal were not in the flood plains. The water system is within the scope of this study. As we finish the report we'll explore opportunities for a community water system. It could be a fairly affordable thing.

This would get older systems out of the flood plain.

There are hurdles to a public drinking water system – but they take time and they're not insurmountable. But the ARPA funds probably couldn't be used for that.

We're a very rural community. What are the number of single-family dwellings and businesses that this would take care of currently?

- A. The existing needs are about 53 family homes (that's homes and businesses). Each uses about 245 gallons per day, based on a 24-hour day of water usage. Recommends building a 35,000 gallons per day capacity for about 140 homes. If we end up with a lot of capacity, we might never use it.

Additional Comments:

- Robert noted that we did look at increasing the capacity of the current town/school system, and we looked further up and over the hill toward South Hill Road, but those did not work out because of unsuitable soils and capacity.
- We reached out to 9 property owners, and many were not interested.
- There's really no need, for the most part, for a village public drinking water system because our drilled bedrock wells are so deep. The presence of wells makes less land available for septic replacement.

Questions, continued:

What are the maintenance costs, ongoing?

- A. For the size system we're talking about, 6,000 gallons or less, it would be a similar amount of maintenance to what you'd see in a single home. Though, there would be some maintenance costs.

Will we be at a place, when this study is done, if the plan was to do a municipal water that could open up more land to do a cluster system – is that what could happen?

- A. That could be an opportunity, but that's not what we've been tasked with here.

This report is a long-range planning document for the community.

Doesn't see how this could be fiscally responsible for the overall town.

- A. We felt it was important to investigate. We'll have a study and might be able to do this in the long run, when/if appropriation property becomes available.

What do we have to do to finish the report, and what hurdles can we expect?

- A. Archeological challenges with test pits took a lot of time – to do more test pits we need to speak with landowners, etc. Also, there is no clear solution to this. It could take another 6 months to create the report. Creating this long-term planning document is/has been a good opportunity.

**Discussion regarding another project:**

- Some municipalities have excess capacity, such as Waterbury, and we could potentially tie in some of North Moretown.
- We're not ready to comment on that possibility at this time.