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**Town of Southborough
Board of Health
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Minutes of the Southborough Board of Health

Meeting Minutes

January 22, 2025 – Board of Health – Virtual Meeting – 12:00 pm

Present:

Board Members, Chelsea Malinowski, Dr. Safdar Medina; Sanitary Inspector, Dennis Costello; Health Agent, Chris Craig; Business Administrator, Barbara Spiri

Also in attendance: Select Board Members, Al Hamilton, Sam Stivers; Resident Paul Carter

Opening:

The meeting of the Board of Health was called to order at 12:04 pm by Ms. Malinowski.

Topic: Discuss the Possibility of Wastewater Treatment Plan for Commercial Buildings on Route 9

Discussion: Mr. Hamilton discussed why he feels a wastewater treatment facility on Route 9 is important and how it would help to lower the tax rate for residents of Southborough. He stated that Southborough is the only community on Rt. 9 between Boston and Goshen that does not have municipal wastewater services.

The benefits of a wastewater system are:

- Makes the town more attractive to a variety of businesses
- Makes currently undeveloped parcels developable (& more taxable)
- Reduces impermeable surfaces
- Increases property value
- Wastewater may be used in place of drinking water or for irrigation
- Provides control of what goes into the environment

Three wastewater treatments have been completed in the past 1.5 years.

Framingham is willing to discuss a connection to their system. MWRA is not taking on more capacity in the foreseeable future. The system for Westborough/Shrewsbury/Hopkinton is at capacity but is interested in expanding capacity. Ground discharge for a system in Southborough is the most logical option.

A wastewater treatment plant will require 4-5 acres of land. Disposable sites need 5-10 acres of land. It needs to be determined who/what the system will provide for – public/private, the downtown area, or areas that have poor septic capacity. The main issue is how to pay for all of this. Funding sources need to be found for the plan. A comprehensive plan will cost the town at least 6 figures.

Mr. Costello stated the next step will be to locate the appropriate land to do soil testing. Mr. Stivers feels connecting to the downtown area would be difficult. He also stated an area near Rt. 495 owned by MassDOT where a discharge system may be located. Mr. Costello stated soil testing would be necessary because soil maps may not be accurate.

Ms. Malinowski asked questions about funding the project. Mr. Stivers said there are grants out there to help support the project. Ms. Malinowski questioned who would be paying for the bond. Mr. Hamilton stated the town would be on the hook to pay for the bond. A ballpark figure from Weston-Sampson is \$30 million. Revenue increase still has not been determined. Mr. Hamilton stressed the importance of attracting more businesses.

Mr. Costell and Mr. Craig are willing to help when a time needs to be scheduled for soil testing.

Southborough resident Paul Carter spoke to the board members. He applauded the work that has been done.

Ms. Malinowski made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:41 pm. Dr. Medina seconded the motion and voted aye. Ms. Malinowski voted aye. Vote: 2-0.

Respectively submitted by Barbara Spiri, Business Administrator and edited by Chelsea Malinowski.



Waste Water Treatment System For Route 9 Properties?

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step”

Lao Tzu

How Has Our Tax Burden Been Shifting?

- The Residential/Commercial-Retail-Industrial (CIP) tax mix has been changing from 80%/20% to the current 83.7%/16.3% mix--this has shifted the property tax burden more toward residential property
- Residential/CIP ratio is likely to get worse for residents
- We need about \$150,000,000 of CIP development to return the ratio to its historic 80/20 level (or ideally, to even more toward CIP)
- The Rt 9 corridor is the only area in town that can accommodate this amount of gain in value

What Are Current Barriers to CIP Growth?

- Zoning – Current zoning is obsolete, overly constraining, and inflexible
- Town Reputation – Southborough is not seen as “Business Friendly”
- Lack of wastewater treatment capacity for Route 9 properties
 - Some parcels on Rt 9 don’t “Perc”
 - Acres of asphalt are required to cover CIP septic systems (mini-plants)
 - We are the only community on Rt 9 between Boston and Goshen (pop 926) without municipal wastewater services



- Some important “CIP businesses” don’t work well with individual septic systems:
 - Restaurants
 - Grocery Stores
 - Bio-Tech
 - Some manufacturing

What Are Benefits Of A Wastewater System?

- Makes the town more attractive to a variety of businesses
 - For example, restaurants generate 8 times the wastewater per square ft vs a commercial building
- Makes currently undevelopable parcels developable (& more taxable)
- Reduces impermeable surfaces
- Wastewater system access increases property value regardless of whether or not a property is connected to the system
- Treated waste water may be used in place of drinking water for some “grey” uses (e.g., irrigation) making this a “green” solution
- Provides better monitoring and control of what is going into the environment

What Is The Progress To Date?

- 3 wastewater studies have been completed in the last 1 ½ years
 - Identified some design options
 - Identified short/medium term wastewater volumes needed (0.5 to 1 MGD)
 - Identified some possible disposal methods and sites
- Last 3 Months
 - A small group has taken the lead with investigating what is required to take the next step, and has reached out to a number of others to gather information

What Is The Most Recent Activity—Part 1

- Met with Framingham DPW to discuss connecting to their system
 - Framingham is very willing to discuss this connection, to move Southborough wastewater through the Framingham system to the MWRA's Deer Island processing plant
- Spoke with the MWRA about processing Southborough wastewater
 - The MWRA is not taking on more capacity in the foreseeable future, so connection to the MWRA is unlikely
- Spoke with a Westborough Select Board representative about the possibility of connecting to the Westborough/Shrewsbury/Hopkinton wastewater system
 - System is currently at capacity, and they are interested in expanding capacity
 - Getting an increase in Westborough's Surface Water Discharge permit (Federal) to increase treated effluent flow into the Assabet River is likely to be difficult
 - Interesting idea: there may be an opportunity for regional cooperation to add wastewater processing capacity (Southborough, Westborough, Shrewsbury, Hopkinton) (Framingham) (Marlborough, Northborough)

What Is The Most Recent Activity—Part 2

- Discussion with Weston and Sampson (authors of one of the recent studies)
 - Confirmed that surface discharge (waste water into a river or stream) is difficult from a regulatory perspective
 - Ground discharge (similar to a leach field) is the most practical option—soil characteristics will determine best locations
 - Treated effluent is “cleaner” than septic flows into a leach field (this effluent can be used for some types of irrigation)
 - Wastewater systems have substantial “economies of scale”—Bigger is Better
 - Wastewater systems can be designed to expand incrementally
- Discussion with MA DEP
 - Confirmed that ground discharge is the most practical disposal method
 - Very willing to help
 - Identified a major next step milestone—development of an “Comprehensive Plan”

What Is The Most Recent Activity—Part 3

- Met with Veolia
 - A national corporation that manages water and wastewater treatment plants
 - Many communities hire 3rd parties to manage their wastewater treatment plants
 - Communities manage the distribution network (pipes and pumps that deliver waste water and treated effluent)
 - Managing the treatment plant is a very specialized business requiring licensed operators
 - Veolia has a Regulated Utility Division that owns and operates water and waste water system on a private basis.
 - Common in Mid Atlantic States (NY, PA, NJ)
 - Operates as a regulated utility, similar to NSTAR, Eversource, National Grid
 - This is not common in New England
 - This could be an attractive option from a Town finance perspective

What Is The Most Recent Activity—Part 4

- Have begun to meet with Rt 9 Stakeholders
 - One meeting so far – Very supportive, understands users will ultimately fund the system
- Will Brief Board of Health on 1/22
 - Health agents have substantial knowledge of local soils
 - Can assist in identifying disposal sites

What Are The “Big Issues”?

- Where to locate a wastewater “Plant” (need about 4-5 acres of land)
- Where to locate a disposal site or sites (need about 5-10+ acres of land)
- “Business Model” options
 - Public
 - Public/Private
 - Private
- Town only vs Regional
 - Town-only is simpler from a regulatory and start-up perspective
 - Regional should be significantly less expensive and may offer a more robust solution
- Rt 9 only vs Other Areas
 - Schools – Public & Private
 - “Downtown”
 - Areas of poor septic capacity
- How to pay for the Integrated Plan and then the system design/construction/operation

What Are The Next Steps?

- Brief Board of Health, Planning Board, EDC
- Continue outreach to Stakeholders
- Discuss with Schools
- Understand the “Comprehensive Plan” requirements
- Look for funding sources
- More discussions with Westborough and Marlborough

What Is The Near-Term Goal (CY 2025)

- Summer of 2025 – Select Board decides whether to proceed with an Comprehensive Plan (Likely \$6 figures)
- Fall 2025 – Fund Comprehensive Plan
- Late 2025 – Begin Comprehensive Plan