

Town of Shaftsbury Sewer Feasibility Study Committee meeting

Thursday April 25, 2024

In person at Cole Hall and remotely via Zoom

~~1. Call to Order by TA Kiernan~~

~~2. Conflict of Interest Statement~~

3. Nomination of Officers

☐ Chair: Mr. Cichanowski moved to nominate Mr. Whitman, who politely declined the nomination.

☐ ~~Vice Chair~~

4. Presentation and discussion with Christina Haskins, Dufresne Engineering Group

Ms. Haskins introduced the discussion. She noted Dufresne will be working with Mance Engineering, Chris Ponessi principal. Also attending were Art Whitman, Emily Hackett of Dufresne (via Zoom), Lilli Williams, Mike Cichanowski (via Zoom), and Gail Tiffany.

Step one is defining the area of study. The Town's RFQ named the South Shaftsbury Village and adjoining village areas. She asked the committee for their thoughts. A discussion ensued. Mr. Ponessi suggested including the bottom half of Twitchell Hill Rd., because some of those parcels will have challenges going forward. Ms. Hackett said it would be unlikely that Shaftsbury would get ARPA funds for any part of the project. She recommended that the project area be no larger than the designated village center plus a quarter-mile buffer (not including the disposal area), to be eligible for State Clean Water funding.

Mr. Cichanowski suggested limiting the area to the four corners area, possibly north to Paulins.

Ms. Haskins said Dufresne will host meetings at least every 30 (needs identified), 60 (alternatives identified and evaluated), and 90 (draft report) percent completion, and more often if necessary.

Mr. Cichanowski said he always imagined that the disposal field will be established in the community green area. Mr. Ponessi noted that the former Howard property is now for sale. It could provide space for a community system. Ms. Williams said if that property could be included in the service area it could yield important housing potential.

Mr. Ponessi said the school wastewater system is slightly oversized, and might offer some future potential. Mr. Whitman mentioned the old Stanley Tool site, which is underused. Ms. Haskins said the funding does not allow for direct discharge.

Mr. Cichanowski said he thinks that for political reasons the study should focus on placing a disposal field on the property the town recently purchased.

Mr. Ponessi said some large landowners might be willing to donate or sell some land for disposal. Ms. Haskins said there could be ARPA funds available for land purchase.

Ms. Haskins noted that public outreach will be very important. She cautioned committee members to share only information they are sure of.

Mr. Cichanowski said he hopes the project will become shovel-ready and move closer to the top of the funding list for additional grants. Ms. Haskins said that despite loud voices in opposition, projects often do move forward. Ms. Hackett urged committee members to be transparent and to stick to the facts. Mr. Ponessi said the final report would be a sort of sketch plan design. Mr. Whitman asked about the Engineering and Planning Grant Advance the town received about twenty years ago – would the town be liable for the grant should the wastewater project go to construction now? Ms. Hackett will get an answer.

Dufresne will prepare handouts for the public meetings. Mailings could go out, flyers, and so on. Ms. Haskins said she thought the project could be completed by December 2024.

Mr. Kiernan said the proposed community center would occupy only a portion of the new town green parcel. Much of the parcel could therefore be used for a disposal field.

The group agreed that the Sewer committee, Community Center/Cole Hall committee, and economic development committee should work together closely, as the success of each depends on the success of all the others.

Ms. Haskins listed some of the sources of data they'll rely on, including town studies, state agency databases, test pits, and archaeological investigation (a complicated process), and others.

The 30% report will include the base map and existing conditions (mostly environmental features). (That information will include septic too close to wells, though that information won't be shared with the committee or the public in general.) It will also include needs, essentially deficiencies as well as economic development goals.

Ms. Hackett encouraged committee members to reach out to her with any questions and reminded all that she is not a regulator.

Ms. Haskins said a number of properties will be assessed. Increasingly, communities are using flexible piping installed using a ditch witch sort of machine rather than stiff tubing installed in deep trenches. Mr. Ponessi and Ms. Haskins described some possible site modifications that could be required to make the new town property suitable for use as a disposal field. He said the entire disposal area could be greatly regraded. He cautioned Mr. Kiernan to not build anything on the new property until the issue of the location of the disposal site has been resolved. Mr. Kiernan noted that the requirement to spend ARPA monies complicates the timing of construction of the community center on the new property.

Ms. Haskins noted that the governing body of the new wastewater district can compel people to connect to the system, or not. The project could also be phased, with more than one field, or with an initial in-ground system followed by a indirect discharge system with pretreatment. Or more than one field could be built, and the fields rotated.

Ms. Haskins noted that water meter data could be used to design certain types of systems.

Mr. Ponessi recommended that the committee meet again to organize itself. Ms. Haskins asked for a contact list for committee members.

~~5. Other Business~~

~~6. Review of Action Items~~

7. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 7:33 p.m.