

**Minutes**  
**Acton Water Resources Advisory Committee**  
**October 11, 2006**  
**A/B Senior High School**  
**Conference Room 115N**  
**14 Charter Road, Acton**

Attendees

Members: Andrew Magee, Lauren Rosenzweig, Eric Hilfer, Helen Probst, Joanna Bissetta, Jim Deming, Allen Nitschelm, Ann Chang, John Ryder, Pam Shuttle

Associates: Carol Holley

Support Staff: Doug Halley, Brent Reagor, J. D. Head

Public: Kevin Geery, Julie Kennedy, Mary Michelman, Terra Friedrichs, Andy Munro, Aidan Smith, Don Barron

The meeting opened at 7:00 P.M.

Mr. Magee as Chairman pro-tem opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. Mr. Nitschelm asked if a calendar has been developed for the work the committee will do. Mr. Magee replied it had not.

The Committee discussed the minutes from the previous meeting. Ms. Friedrichs raised a concern that the minutes did not include a discussion of a “do nothing” scenario. Mr. Magee responded that it was not discussed at that meeting. Mr. Nitschelm suggested some rewording of the perpetuity of flow discussion. Ms. Probst suggested some changes in the website discussion. Ms. Chang moved to accept the minutes as amended, Mr. Ryder seconded, and the minutes were accepted unanimously.

Mr. Reagor gave a presentation of the basics of conventional septic systems. This is a first in a series of educational programs for the WRAC. Future presentations will cover onsite technology, sewer construction, sewer finance, onsite management and more. Mr. Reagor went over the origination of the term “septic” septic system and its negative connotations. Onsite Wastewater System (OWS) is now the preferred nomenclature.

An OWS has four main components; wastewater source, primary treatment vessel, effluent dispersal zone and soil. Primary treatment occurs in the septic tank that is designed for a 2-4 day residence time. The sewage separates into 3 zones; scum, wastewater and sludge. The minimum size of a tank is 1500 gallons and they can be made of plastic, fiberglass or metal. The tank should be pumped every other year.

Effluent dispersal from the septic tank is done within the “leaching area”, where additional treatment occurs. Soil is used as the treatment medium. It primarily removes pathogenic organisms.

The design of an OWS requires deep test holes to establish the groundwater depth and percolation tests that establish the sizing of the “leaching area”. Design is governed by Title 5 and BOH regulations and must be done by qualified professionals. There was a discussion on the requirements of groundwater measurements. It was noted that groundwater was defined at the vertical location where 2% of the soils had redox. It was noted that this was reflective of a high groundwater elevation that occurs once every twenty years.

The installation of a system must be performed by licensed and qualified contractors. Construction of a system usually takes one week. The average cost is between \$20,000 and \$40,000. Construction is inspected by a licensed engineer and the BOH.

System maintenance requires pumping every other year to remove the sludge and scum and to promote a healthy biology. Garbage disposals are not allowed unless the homeowner makes a major investment. Homeowners should limit the bleach and Drano use. Ms Friedrichs noted that homeowners should preserve their system by using biodegradable products. It was noted that liquid detergent should be used instead of solid detergent. Water conservation is a key function to the long term operation of a system. Nothing should be flushed that could be detrimental to the system or that can be handled through another mechanism.

Trees and deep rooting plants should be at least 10’ feet away from a system. No digging should be done in the system. Regulatory setbacks for additions and decks should be maintained. Homeowners should watch for damp areas and consider system inspections every five years.

An onsite system is a major, costly piece of a home’s infrastructure. They do not last forever, however, proper care, maintenance and oversight will prolong a system’s life.

Ms. Michelman suggested that the presentation be copied and made available to the public. Ms. Friedrichs suggested that it be placed on a web site and offered to donate a URL for that purpose. It was also suggested that this information be advertised in the newspaper and the quarterly newsletter.

Mr. Magee went over the proposed mission statement. Ms. Chang suggested an alternative proposed statement. The committee decided to have Ms. Chang distribute her proposal for comment by members. The mission statement would then be considered at the next WRAC meeting.

The committee discussed forming subcommittees to examine particular issues. It was determined to form an Existing System Disposal Capacity Subcommittee to review the current and potential wastewater capacity at the existing wastewater treatment plant. The

sub-committee will consist of Mr. Nitschelm, Ms. Probst, Mr. Reagor, Ms. Bissetta and Mr. Head.

The Committee discussed forming a Public Relations subcommittee for public outreach and education. A Finance subcommittee was also discussed. Mr. Nitschelm discussed the need for a detailed analysis of different solutions with a fiscal analysis.

The Committee also determined to form a Sewer Expansion Feasibility Sub-Committee. This sub-committee will review the needs areas as determined in the CWRMP and re-evaluate the prioritization of inclusion within the sewer service area, as well as, re-evaluate the needs areas. The subcommittee will consist of Ms. Chang, Ms. Rosenzweig, Mr. Ryder, Mr. Nitschelm and Mr. Halley.

The Committee requested that Assistant Town Manager John Murray come to the next meeting to give a presentation on the finance aspects of a sewer project. The Committee also requested that meetings be scheduled at locations that have video-taping capability.

Mr. Hilfer suggested that ideas be put on a chart with planning horizons. From this a strategic plan can be developed.

The Committee discussed the prioritization identifying capacity and neighborhood communication. Should communication be defined by CWRMP components? Does the Committee agree with the report? Do the Needs Areas want it? Can the solutions be afforded?

Ms. Chang stated that democracy was not the only driving factor. Impacts to the environment should be taken into consideration. Mr. Magee stated that economic considerations should be given to Needs Areas in the commercial villages.

The committee scheduled the next two meetings for November 15<sup>th</sup> and December 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M. Staff will seek a meeting place that will allow video-taping of the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 P.M.