

Minutes
Acton Water Resources Advisory Committee
June 20, 2007
Meeting Room
Memorial Library

Attendees

Members: Andy Magee, Lauren Rosenzweig, Ken Sundberg, Eric Hilfer, Nancy Tavernier, Allen Nitschelm, Joanne Bissetta, Ann Chang

Associates: Carol Holley

Support Staff: Doug Halley

Public: Mary Michelman, Terra Friedrichs

Mr. Magee called the meeting to order at 7:05PM.

Minutes

Minutes of March 21, 2007 and May 9, 2007 were approved as amended.

Request for Proposals

Mr. Halley reviewed with the Committee the sole response to the Town's Request for Proposals for the Rapid Infiltration Basin Capacity Study. It was noted that while many consultants requested copies of the RFP only Woodard & Curran responded with a proposal. Staff reported that their review found the proposal to be responsive and within the budget designated. Mr. Magee requested that Woodard & Curran provide several potential times for a Kick Off meeting with the Committee. Ms. Chang moved to recommend the acceptance of the RFP response to the Selectmen. The Committee unanimously approved. A copy of the RFP response was requested to be sent to the Water District.

Meeting Schedule

The Committee scheduled July 18th and August 16th for the next WRAC meetings.

Staff Review of CWRMP Prioritization Process

Mr. Halley reviewed with the Committee the process that the CAC used during the development of the CWRMP to determine priorities for each of the needs areas. The process began in July of 2004. At that time the CAC considered two tables developed by W&C; Criteria for Technical Assessment and Criteria for Non-Technical Assessment. After reviewing the two tables the CAC found that they could not distinguish levels of difference with the technical assessments and therefore determined to consider all technical assessments to have the same prioritization level. The Committee decided to rely solely on the criteria for Non-Technical Assessment to delineate prioritization with emphasis on implementability, economic growth, optimization and reuse/recharge.

The CAC developed consensus action items including: evaluate likelihood of discharge into an approved Zone II and focus on optimizing the existing WWFT, while identifying a discharge point for a WWFT to service East Acton. They also made an initial assessment of high priority needs areas which included Powdermill Plaza & West Acton (economic growth/connect to existing), Audubon Hill (connect to existing), Dover Heights and Spencer Road (part of original area/aesthetics impact), East Acton (economic growth/discharge on Wetherbee St.), and Indian Village and Brucewood Estates (needs more sewer capacity/aesthetics impact).

The CAC then embarked on a two year process that included additional information from public input from public meetings, hydrogeologic studies; DEP feedback and continued reassessment of needs prioritization. The final ranking consensus considered structural factors like environmental impact of current systems and regulatory non-compliance and non-structural factors like ease of implementability, economic stimulus and political realities.

Important factors considered by the CAC were the additional 49,000 gallons of capacity available at the existing WWTF; adjacent areas to the existing sewers assumed to be the most cost effective, and limited capacity allows only part of West Acton on Spencer/Tuttle.

Mr. Nitschelm again raised the issue of utilizing excess capacity before the Committee decides how/where to expand the sewer system. He argued that residents who chose not to hook-up be given a deadline and that excess capacity be "sold" to someone else (using some fair mechanism to be determined). The goal is to get as many problem properties on the system and to expand efficiently. If we add 100 users for 100 people who choose not to hook up, that will reduce the average expansion cost and, more importantly, will protect the environment by having 100 fewer properties discharging into a backyard septic system. The committee discussed possible ways this could be accomplished.

Ms. Friedrichs brought up water quality from the discharge to the RIBS and its relationship to Water District well fields. She suggested that the Water District be invited to future meetings.

Staff Overview of Wastewater Management Districts

Mr. Halley provided an overview to the Committee on the parameters of Wastewater Management Districts (WMD). Some of the key components that can be considered a part of a WMD are mandatory pumping, periodic inspections, educational programs, prescriptive performance and funding assistance. Potential actions for the Committee to consider include adoption of Wastewater Districts, adoption of a Wastewater Bylaw, adoption of a Betterment Bylaw, identification of Cluster Solutions, contract negotiations and bids and septage management. Mr. Halley noted that a more detailed discussion was planned for the next WRAC meeting.

Mr. Nitschelm raised the issue of allowing Acton septic system discharge to be sent to the Wastewater Treatment Plant, which could earn extra revenue for the town by using up

capacity that isn't being presently used. Mr. Halley said that the Treatment Plant would have to be modified to accept this discharge as it was more potent than normal flow from the sewer system. Mr. Halley also noted that this might reduce the Town's risk if current discharge plans were to be interrupted by other town or state action.

Mr. Hilfer submitted to the Committee a proposed framework for re-prioritizing the Needs Areas. The Committee then discussed the feasibility of prioritizing Needs Areas based on their proximity to resources such as public water supply wells, wetlands, brooks, etc. Mr. Magee asked that the Committee review Mr. Hilfer's proposal and that it will be on the agenda for the July 18th meeting.

The Committee discussed on how to move forward with an Education plan. The General consensus was that there was more than enough public information available regarding on site wastewater maintenance. Questions were raised regarding what was the best way to get information to the target audience. Suggestions were made regarding using Acton's web site, the Quarterly newsletter or direct mailings. Funding of an educational program was briefly discussed.

The Committee also discussed reinstating the septic tank pumping notification program by sending out reminder letters or postcards.

Ms. Chang moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 P.M., Ms. Tavernier seconded, the motion carried unanimously.