

DRAFT

Attendees:

Jeff Adams
Alan Cathcart
Toby Kramer
Paul Mahoney
Kent Nichols (Weston and Sampson)
Elena Proakis Ellis
Marcia Rasmussen
Brent Reagor
Richard Reine
Fred Watriss
Chris Whelan
Jeff Wieand

Public Comment – None.

Continued Discussion/Comments – Draft Wastewater Planning Task Force Report –

Rich Reine explained that this draft has been distributed for comments to the Board of Selectmen and was discussed at their meeting on December 1. The quantification of wastewater needs continues to be discussed. The planning background supporting the current future wastewater flow range of 320,000 – 600,000 gallons per day can be found in the Draft WWPTF report. This number is not meant to be exact and there are assumptions built into the range that are described in the report. The range and how it relates to the proposed warrant article should be discussed in this meeting to ensure the task force understands and supports the volume recommended.

Alan Cathcart added that there have been a significant number of edits already included in the latest version of the report and that task force members should be sure to focus their attention on this latest version. . A table has been inserted in the Executive Summary, as requested by Paul Mahoney at the last meeting. Planning narratives and assumptions in Section 2.2 through 3.2 should continue to be administered through Marcia Rasmussen, if task force members have further comments on those sections. All other suggested edits should be submitted to Elena Proakis Ellis.

Rich Reine stated that the task force should be sure to review and provide input on Section 5.0 “Conclusions and Recommendations.” The five questions proposed in the summary report are outlined in this section with answers provided where appropriate. It was noted that more information, above and beyond the scope of work completed today,

would be required to answer several outstanding questions; this information will be part of the next phase if approved by Town Meeting.

The numbered list on Page 26 needs to be focused on and made clear for Town Meeting and for the Selectmen. A timeline for these items may also be helpful.

Rich Reine explained that the intent of the article is to quantify a certain volume based on the wastewater planning models that were created, discussions with the large users, the infill numbers, as well as the existing commitments for future phases. The range is from 320,000 to 600,000 gallons per day. In order to move forward into the next phase (alternatives analysis) some consensus needs to be obtained from the town that this range is acceptable and supported.

Fred Watriss stated that funds to pursue design alternatives and capacity studies of the different approaches are what is being sought. A discussion of the ranges can be discussed after costs are established to relate them to.

Chris Whelan stated that if the town does not want this initiative pursued, leading to additional capacity and the growth associated with that, this should be established sooner rather than later.

Paul Mahoney mentioned that according to the chart on Page 1, planning should be for 300,000 to 600,000 gallons per day, which he feels will be interpreted at 25-50% growth when compared to the flow at the existing wastewater plant. The other way to look at it is to say that 300,000 needs to be provided because that is what people can ask for by right today; this is capacity that has been planned for that we no longer have. A discussion of how this situation came about can occur. Provisions for the first 300,000 need to be provided at a minimum. The other 300,000 is if opportunities are explored that have been brought forth in other plans that the town has done.

There was agreement with the need to immediately plan and provide for the obligations that the Town currently has under existing zoning up to 320,000 gallons per day. Failure to properly plan for these commitments could result in legal challenges and non-compliance with our wastewater permit

Alan Cathcart reiterated that 320,000 or 600,000 gallons is not being obtained or created through this article. A request to evaluate alternatives is being sought to better understand what solutions and technologies could potentially be proposed. Without better understanding what alternatives exists, the task force is not in a position to provide the town with information as to real costs or what financial mechanisms would be required if increased capacity is desired. This article provides a way of determining that information . It was also noted that the sewer improvement fund would be utilized to explore the alternative analysis, since that fund is intended for expenditures related to sewer capacity. The proposal is not intended to request funding for the design of a facility - it is for planning.

Rich Reine explained that there are commitments right now for projects deemed to be in the best interest of the Town and in line with the CLRP and PPHP where relief valves are in place to allow provisional connections to the sewer system. A short or mid-term solution is required. If a solution could be implemented that does not require a large capital investment and can be done with existing funding in the Sewer Improvement Fund or thru administrative or process changes, this would provide a relief valve for the Town's existing obligations while a longer-term solution is developed.

Chris Whelan suggested that if the current plant were to be upgraded, with a goal of treating an additional 150,000 to 200,000 gallons per day, there could be a multi-million dollar cost involved. The alternative analysis may help make that determination. The purpose of going to Town Meeting with this proposal is to get community buy-in, for allocation of the funds for the alternative analysis. Appropriation of funds is not required based on the Sewer Improvement Fund.

Elena Proakis-Ellis mentioned that there are more alternatives on the list that do not require Town Meeting vote in the future than just the permit modification. These include conservation, and others. If there was a public/private partnership where the private entity was building the plant and the town was to take it over in the future, and there was no capital expenditure at the outset, perhaps a town meeting vote is not required.

Fred Watriss stated that there are short term measures that should be implemented. He suggested that the article allow for spending up to some limit to design alternatives for the 20 year plan and to evaluate alternatives and implement short term changes. This means taking funding out of the sewer improvement fund, at no cost to the taxpayer, and spending some of it on implementing short term changes.

Chris Whelan stated that town meeting approved the creation of the fund and authorized the use of the funds to be expended. There is no need to go to town meeting to ask for the utilization of sewer improvement funds to create more capacity. It is necessary to go to town meeting when you borrow money, acquire land or appropriate taxpayer money. The real question is do we want to create new capacity for the village overlay growth, economic development, or other initiatives not accounted for with present sewer capacity. Town meeting approval is not needed to spend the \$142,000 but it is a tool to use to say we think we should spend \$142,000 to look at this range of treatment capacities and to solicit input from the community. If approval is not obtained, I/I arrangements and permitting will not be stopped. Town Meeting could decide that the growth associated with new sewer capacity is not desired.

Rich Reine stated that the reason for going to town meeting would be because the \$142,000.00 that is asked for is specifically for the creation of new capacity, above the 320,000 gallons attributed to existing commitments. This alternatives evaluation could take place while also possibly implementing short term alternatives.

Alan Cathcart stated again that it is important to communicate that we are not looking for approval to build 600,000 gallons per day. We are looking for approval to identify

alternatives and develop cost estimates associated with the range of alternatives for planning purposes. The town will have the opportunity later to decide whether they wish to design and build this based on a return to Town Meeting for authorization.

Paul Mahoney expressed that we are talking about creating new capacity and how it relates to growth, but what needs to be done is to split it out to explain that new capacity is needed to meet previous commitments, and also exploration of additional capacity for previously identified goals must be explored. New capacity must be created to fulfill existing obligations regardless of the decision on the additional capacity to meet other planning goals.

Marcia Rasmussen added that it must be clearly communicated in the report that the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) came out before the Comprehensive Long Range Plan and the Planned Housing Production Plan. The Wastewater Management Plan was growth neutral, looking at the environmental impacts to the community, focusing primarily on residential properties. It did not look at growth in the village centers, industrial areas or anything else. Some thought needs to be put into how the three villages will change and evolve, looking at smart growth and integration of residential uses in the centers, as well as changes in technology that might have a higher water demand or require additional capacity. This should somehow be integrated in the plan, perhaps in the summary section.

It's important to determine whether the minimum amount of capacity is to be pursued at low cost, or if the Town chooses to look into a higher amount of capacity for its future vision. There will be a break point where the first "x" gallons can be achieved at a very low cost per gallon, and then "y" or "x" will be added at a very high cost per gallon. If you don't do any natural planning, it will be first come first serve at the lower price. Your money won't fund the whole solution. You need to understand what you are planning for.

Chris Whelan suggested that Town Meeting be asked to approve the modification of the Comprehensive Wastewater Plan that will now include long range planning, housing and economic development. It was recognized that this could be even more complicated than what was originally proposed.

Buy-in is desired from Town Meeting; it is simply a question of how to frame that. It may be a mistake to provide a menu of choices. It would be best to present what the Task Force feels is appropriate and then ask the town to support it.

Rich Reine reiterated that what may be appropriate is the current commitments that exist based on current zoning, infill and the already approved sewer phases.

Rich also stated that we are shifting gears. At first the discussion was about going to town meeting to report moving forward with commitments to the 300,000 gallon per day number, and not asking for authorization for funding for capital expenditures, but an

update about the investigation of alternatives, and coming back to a future town meeting for anything above that (that would require zoning changes, etc.).

Elena suggested that without some sort of community buy in at a forum such as Town Meeting, the same questions would continue to be asked time and again as to why the Town is moving forward with any particular volume of capacity expansion.

Paul Mahoney stated that he is anticipating two fundamental questions from town meeting:

- 1) How were we so far off on the first phase that we are 25% short? and
- 2) Why is a commitment to support an additional 300,000 capacity being requested for future expansion without details about what that involves?

Rich mentioned that the two plans that came out after the Wastewater Management Plan were not growth neutral, they had smart growth and affordable housing. Those pieces were not identified as part of the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan.

Paul responded that he did not think Affordable Housing was an issue given the present ability of the town to meet the 10% threshold. Chris Whelan suggested that the community may still want to develop some scattered affordable housing in a smart growth situation.

Elena stated that the CWMP was intended to meet only existing needs already developed. The 320,000 gallons would meet existing commitments through current zoning, beyond what is already developed, which was not accounted for in the CWMP aside from the infill capacity that has already been used.

Rich added that residential existing needs were determined and the balance was allocated to those needs. There is not enough capacity to satisfy future phases at this point. There were other existing needs that were identified in this report that had not been discussed in the CWMP that now have been identified through the Comprehensive Long Range Plan and the Planned Production Housing Plan. Serving the existing needs and commitments is how we are coming up with this 320,000 gallon per day number. A possible strategy is to use the existing capacity or commitments as the reason to create capacity without large capital expenditures and come back at some future time for property acquisition or capital expenditures, in the event they are necessary and support is shown to investigate capacity between 320,000 and 600,000 gpd.

Jeff Wieand agreed that Rich Reine's suggestion to present an update of the Wastewater Task Force at town meeting, rather than a request for approval, might be a good idea.

Rich stated that we are currently operating with Weston and Sampson on our current contract with money in the sewer fund, for comprehensive wastewater management planning. This has already been authorized at Town Meeting and is included in our current capital plan. We could continue to operate utilizing that funding that is already in place.

It was suggested that work could commence to determine short-term measures now, obtaining buy-in at town meeting only for volumes over those already obligated.

Rich stated that if Town Meeting turns down this request, we would be in a position that we would only have authorization for existing commitments, under the \$142,000 that is in the sewer improvement fund. If some type of significant change was required at the plant, this would need to be presented at Town Meeting the following year to create capacity for those 300,000 gallons per day.

Chris stated that if Town Meeting says “no” to any new growth, that the \$1,000,000 in the sewer improvement fund can be used for the intended purpose of creating more capacity to meet present commitments.

Fred Watriss suggested that all you’re really asking is “Do they want to expand the scope of the alternatives analysis to deal with more than current requirements?” There are a range of possible scenarios for the next twenty years.

Kent Nichols mentioned that there is no model similar to Concord in this particular situation. MWRA-served communities do not have restaurants that are unable to add on as a result of inability to increase wastewater flow. These types of problems are not faced by MWRA communities. Other communities have recently built their systems and they are not experiencing a capacity problem. Concord is one of the few communities addressing capacity constraints. Others which operate their own systems will follow. If Concord does not plan for this obligation there will be consequences.

Chris mentioned that he will rewrite the article to be a request to approve the expenditure of funds to do some planning beyond the current needs and commitments into the realm of new capacity to accommodate smart growth.

Elena suggested that the flow numbers may require some refinement as a portion of the numbers are based on Title 5, which are generally higher than actual flows. The future phase numbers are based on 70 gallons per person per day, assuming three people in each household, which closely approximates actual flows. On the other hand, the new planning numbers are based on Title 5, which more accurately reflects peak flows, therefore overestimates actual average daily flows. The group felt that for planning level purposes, the Title 5 numbers should be utilized to ensure some contingency is built in.

Town Meeting Warrant Article

It was agreed that it would be helpful to have a rewrite of the article for the Town Meeting preparation meeting on Saturday. It was also acknowledged that it will likely evolve by the time it gets to the warrant, and may also change by town meeting, but it will be helpful to have a revised version ready.

On December 15, the Board of Selectmen will be meeting to discuss a new article. Some of the questions that have come up should be addressed, perhaps in the form of a clarification memo.

In the coming months, the question of what it would cost to retrofit the existing plant for additional flow can be explored. This is something that should be worked on for town meeting. The order of magnitude and where the funding would come from is to be determined.

The next meeting of this task force is scheduled for January 6, 2009.