Minutes of the Water Quality Management Committee, February 7, 2019

Members Present: Ron Zweig, Steve Leighton, Virginia Valiela, Eric Turkington, John Waterbury, Matt Charette, Tom Duncan. Also present Anastasia Rudenko and Jeff Gregg from GHD; LWV observer; Paul Dreyer, Planning Board; Selectman Doug Brown; Amy Lowell, Wastewater Superintendent; Thomas Bott, Town Planner and Julian Suso, Town Manager.

To view video of full meeting, see the following link:


1. Presentation by GHD on wastewater discharge options for Falmouth

Anastasia Rudenko from GHD presented several options for new discharge sites for Falmouth’s wastewater. The options presented included utilizing existing open sand beds, creating new sand beds or leaching trenches on identified parcels, and two locations for ocean outfall. Each discharge option was presented on a capital cost basis on its ability to handle flows from the Teaticket/Acapesket Sewer Study Area (TASSA) and the Existing Sewer Redevelopment Area (ESRA). The capability of each discharge option’s capacity to meet potential additional discharge demands was discussed. Several members agreed that they would like to see an inclusion of the anticipated system lifetime maintenance costs presented to close the gap between the capital cost for each of the options. Information is also needed on what the ‘total wastewater picture’ is for Falmouth.

Ron Zweig gave an additional presentation on incorporating a potential ocean outfall in Falmouth as part of creating an Upper Cape regional wastewater approach. In this approach, Falmouth could serve as a regional wastewater hub for the towns of Mashpee, Bourne, Falmouth, and Sandwich and create a revenue stream to offset the capital cost of the ocean outfall. Virginia Valiela stated that the four upper cape towns are presently looking at Joint Base Cape Cod as a regional approach. Also, the town of Mashpee has just signed a contract with GHD to design a treatment plant to be located at the Transfer Station.

Members agreed that more discussion was needed about the various options.

2. Discussion and vote on SMAST final report

‘PondWatch Nutrient Related Water Quality Bournes Pond, Great Pond, Green Pond, Little Pond, Oyster


Pond, West Falmouth Harbor: SMAST POST -MEP
Sampling Assessment

Virginia Valiela updated the members that a final version of the PondWatch report was issued. She also indicated that the committee now has all of the components outlined in the contract and it can be finalized. Tom Duncan expressed concerned whether WQMC would be agreeing to the conclusions in report, particularly about inlet widening. Virginia Valiela stated that WQMC does not have to agree with the findings and that the committee is able to use and interpret the data at their discretion. Virginia Valiela motioned to accept the report, John Waterbury seconded. Unanimously approved.

3. Discussion and vote on the Statement of Qualifications for Falmouth’s aquaculture nitrogen reduction pilot project

Chairman Turkington briefly reviewed the Statement of Qualifications (SoQ) that was presented at the last meeting. Peter Chase, Chairman of the Shellfish Advisory Committee, informed the members that the shellfish advisory committee approved the content of SoQ and emphasized that the goal of the program was water quality improvements. Ron Zweig raised a concern that the opinions of DMF should be considered before the SoQ goes any farther in the process. There were discussions on why a formerly proposed rotational aquaculture strategy was not included in the SoQ. Peter Chase commented that a rotational system might not work because there is not always good substrate for growing quahogs under areas prime for oysters. One goal of the proposed project is utilizing areas with unproductive bottoms and making them productive through oyster aquaculture while not taking away areas from commercial and recreational harvesters. Steve Leighton moved to support the SoQ; John Waterbury seconded. Six members were in favor, one opposed. Motion passed.

4. Recommendation on expenditure of state budget earmark ($25k) – discussion and vote

Chairman Turkington reviewed the list of options for earmark funds. Tom Duncan moved the recommendations, John Waterbury seconded. One concern raised was whether there would be a grandfather inclusion for someone who installs an i/a system if sewer of that area happens at a later date. Members agreed that it is no different than the prior incentive program which did not include grandfathering. A request to include an option for eco-toilets was also made. Based on the response to the eco-toilet demonstration project other members did not feel that eco-toilets is something the community is embracing and would not need to be included on this
recommendation. Ron Zweig motioned to include eco-toilets as an option, Tom Duncan seconded. Motion to amend: two in favor, five opposed. Motion failed. Main motion: five members in favor, two opposed. Motion passed.

5. Reports of members and staff

Virginia Valiela gave an update on the upcoming contributions from GHD. She indicated that GHD will make their second presentation at the March 21st meeting. Additionally, the status of the CWMP update was relayed. She informed members that they would be reviewing on a chapter by chapter basis and that the proposed timing for their review of the chapter drafts would be one week. It was requested that members have more than one week to review the material, with a preference of having three weeks to allow for a more thorough review.

Chairman Turkington indicated that the town has allocated $60 million in its capital projects for 2024 for wastewater improvements.

Ron Zweig reported that he submitted town Warrant Article 31 for consideration at the Spring 2019 town meeting. The article included funds for monitoring shellfish aquaculture in Bournes Pond. Virginia Valiela stated that the Finance Committee would not vote to approve the article without having the outstanding SMAST data to justify the expenditure. Tom Duncan recommended that discussion on the Article 31 be included as an agenda item for an upcoming meeting.

Matt Charette reported that he was approached by a scientist inquiring on whether the town of Falmouth would be interested in a denitrification monitoring project in conjunction with the proposed aquaculture nitrogen reduction pilot project as described in the SoQ. The monitoring project would need baseline data prior to gear being put in the water, planned for this spring. WQMC would be willing to consider a proposal for such a project.

6. Vote minutes of prior meetings (01.17.19)

Steve Leighton moved the minutes with no corrections. Tom Duncan seconded. So voted.

7. Motion to Adjourn – 4:24pm. Unanimous.

Minutes submitted by Kristen Rathjen.