Minutes of the Water Quality Management Committee, March 21, 2019

Members Present: Ron Zweig, Steve Leighton, Virginia Valiela, Eric Turkington, Matt Charette. Also present: Anastasia Rudenko and Mark Drainville, GHD; Julian Suso, Town Manager; Peter Johnson-Staub, Assistant Town Manager; Selectman Doug Brown; Selectman Samuel Patterson; Amy Lowell, Wastewater Superintendent; Peter Fang and fellow Trustee, Falmouthport Homeowner’s Association

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


1. Presentation by GHD on the ‘Teaticket / Acapesket Sewer Study Area: Conceptual Design’ – Anastasia Rudenko

Anastasia Rudenko presented the conceptual design for the Teaticket / Acapesket sewer study area as developed by GHD. Great Pond is a high priority for sewer because it has the second highest nitrogen removal target of all of Falmouth’s estuaries and will only be able to meet the TMDL with sewer. The conceptual cost estimates are based on the 2025 debt drop off and the assumption that there will be a total of $60 million available for the sewering project. All options presented for sewer initiated with a total of $60 million and subtracted out the relative construction and engineering costs. The remaining collection / transmission system funds determine how many parcels can be sewer for each option. The timeline for decision making and the next steps were also presented.

Chairman Turkington gave additional background on the rationale, time and efforts put into the development of this project. Virginia Valiela emphasized that there is a 40-year planning horizon. Planning the project around the debt drop off windows to minimize tax increases is being taken into consideration. Both Chairman Turkington and Valiela emphasized that this presentation is the very beginning of the public involvement process and requires a lot of town insight and input.

Several suggestions for updating the figures and cost totals were made including a request for a visualization of the possible number of parcels sewer for each option, adjusting targets to account for the nitrogen that is already being removed by other efforts (eg., sewer as part of the Little Pond Sewer Service Area, fertilizer reduction, shellfish, etc.), accounting for the inclusion of additional sewer projects in other areas, and a cost-benefit analysis for the amount of nitrogen to be removed by each option regardless if the project exceeds the $60 million cost. Chairman Turkington commented that it is difficult to predict how many parcels could be sewer with the predicted funds due to variable costs for the infrastructure needed. The constructions costs will vary greatly depending on the ability to find and acquire sites for multiple lift stations or using low pressure systems. Ron Zweig requested that energy consumption and carbon emissions for each option be presented. He emphasized the importance to consider other 21st century environmental concerns in the options.
Several comments emphasized the need to consider the longer-term management of effluent and the possibility of a regional approach with neighboring municipalities either through Joint Base Cape Cod or an ocean outfall. Amy Lowell gave a brief explanation on some of the complexities associated with option and costs of the Joint Base Cape Cod option. Costs are contingent on which other municipalities elect to participate and what level of upgrades are needed on the base to handle the anticipated discharge capacity. The timing of Joint Base Cape Cod becoming available as an option is unknown.

Virginia Valiela emphasized that for all options there are still environmental evaluations of downstream effects needed. She also remarked that the community has a huge challenge to think about a lot of specific factors in the short-term planning but also need to keep sight of the planning horizon to account for future projects and other municipalities.

2. Proposal for WQMC participation in WHOI Southeast New England Program (SNEP) pre-proposal for PRB – discussion and vote

Virginia Valiela presented background on the permeable reactive barrier (PRB) working group and the basis for exploring the option of installing a PRB on the Town owned Shorewood Drive parcel. Through other funding sources baseline evaluations of the site have been completed. All prior testing indicates that it is a promising site for a PRB.

Two prior attempts to obtain funding for the PRB passed the pre-proposal stage but were not awarded. Discussions with the program manager for the Southeast New England Program (SNEP) have indicated that a PRB proposal would be within the scope of program. The deadline for the 2019 SNEP pre-proposal submission is April 5th. WHOI has offered to be the lead on the project if WQMC decides to submit a proposal. Chairman Turkington commented that this has been part of the WQMC’s charge, and the Town has been in support of the installation of the PRB. The working group has several ideas for reducing the overall budget of the proposal including requesting more in-kind support from the WQMC’s technical consultant.

Several concerns were raised on whether there is a potential conflict of interest through WHOI and whether the proposed technical consultant time would need to go to bid. Follow-up with the Finance Department and Town Counsel was requested.

Members agreed they would like more information on the potential return on investment and clarification on the conflict of interest and in-kind technical support. No vote. Discussion to continue at April 4th WQMC meeting.
3. Reports of members and staff

Ron Zweig gave an update on article 31. He reported that the outlined project plan was able to reduce the cost to $40,860 from the $65,000 that the WQMC voted to support. The project plan was presented to the Finance Committee which voted unanimously in favor to support the funding of article 31. Ron thanked WQMC and SMAST for their support of article 31.

Ron Zweig requested that emails that come in to the WQMC town email account be distributed to all members to be aware first-hand of public feedback. Chairman Turkington agreed.

Kristen Rathjen reported that Brian Howes has made initial contact with the DEP on seeking an agricultural exemption to install a tailwater recovery system in the cranberry bogs upstream of Mill Pond. A formal meeting between Brian Howes and the DEP was scheduled within the next week. An update will be provided when available.

Virginia Valiela reported that the next meeting will be April 4th starting at 2:30pm. Edits to Chapter 3 will be part of the Agenda.

4. Vote minutes of prior meetings (03.07.19)

Several corrections and amendments were made to the minutes. Steve Leighton moved to accept the minutes with the suggested edits. Matt Charette seconded. So voted.

5. Motion to Adjourn – 5:07 pm. Unanimous.

Minutes submitted by Kristen Rathjen.

List of Documents
- Draft minutes of the 03-07-2019 WQMC meeting

List of Presentations
- Teaticket / Acapesket Sewer Study Area: Conceptual Design – Anastasia Rudenko, GHD