

Grafton Planning Commission

Regular Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, June 12, 7:00 PM

Grafton Town Hall 2nd Floor

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81340393010?pwd=TDk5Y3FDaUNYNVBHNmRRVGNwbWRiZz09>

Not ADA Compliant: Please provide notice should access or assistance to the meeting be required

MINUTES

1. Meeting called to Order 7:17
2. The agenda was approved
3. The minutes of the minutes from May 9, 2023 will be approved at July meeting.
4. Wastewater discussion. Lester reported recent Select Board meeting with T&B on wastewater. Erin (T&B) reported that T&B doesn't have any solution for Grafton village. T&B didn't seem to indicate any specific plan for a solution, nevertheless they are asking for an additional \$30,000 to get to the end of Phase 1. The discussion at the Select Board seemed to emphasize that the town is not paying, the state is paying, as a result of this "logic" the SB voted to go forward and pay the additional money to T&B, even though T&B and the State itself are not interested in looking at alternatives biological solution. For example, a drip disposal—surface or slightly sub-surface irrigation, which Eric had communicated to ANR previously. There is confusion about whether you can use the water for crops. The state granting agency seems to think no, but experts(??) say that the water can be used even for drinking. Because of climate change and consequent extremes in weather (drought, too much rain), it is very possible that we are going to be re-localizing agriculture here; so it could be very valuable to have this kind of water available for crops.
Bob Donald, Windham Foundation, at the PC meeting said that WF doesn't get not get any communication directly from T&B even when they inquire. Donald was asked, what problems are you facing? He said that they test all the times and have not any issues to date.
The PC summarized for Donald the alternatives that PC has been trying to investigate. Living Machine, engineered aquatic environment system, engineering plant life in containers that waste water feeds through, anaerobic digestion first, then aerobic with different bacteria, then greenhouse with different plants. Each tank filters it further and further down the line. The result is very clean water that can go into a lesser leech field to go back to the aquifer or can be used for agriculture. We are trying to get more information about it. Todd Engineering took over the living machine trademark. Reached out to them but haven't heard much back. We also reached out to Stone Engineering and haven't heard back from them either. Both companies may know that the State isn't behind funding it. We may need to go to Montpelier and push. There is a Living Machine used in couple of towns and working all over the country; why can't they work here in the small village, Matt speak with Hannah from BioDyne. She is a water scientist; she is taking a course on the Living Machine concept. She's very interested, maybe we should meet with her. She thinks that the cheese whey could be a good catalyst for the system. PC comment: the State of VT is very conservative. NH is 20 years ahead of us. You wouldn't need nearly as large of a location and it's all enclosed.
Returning to the issue of the Select Board meeting, Lester reported that the discussion included a statement that only the people in the village would be paying for the system if built. Everyone

agreed that it would be too expensive for this small group of households to support. But that isn't stopping the extra funding to T&B. Select Board agreed to use Chris Company as the ombudsperson for liaison, point person, for the town, and all the vested interests, all the players. Eric said that someone at the regional commission would be the grant administrator for this project. They are in the mode of doing that kind of thing. Morgan could learn. But probably good to use the regional commission's expertise and their involvement.

PC discussed this idea of using "free State" money (really our tax dollars) by T&B. The town doesn't have a satisfactory scope and deliverables contract with T&B. Why would we do that? General sense of time to pull the plug. Matt said that one of the irritations is that there is nothing that they could do here but now they are wanting another 30K and we will come back and tell you that there is nothing to do here.

We asked Donald: How important is it for the Windham Foundation to solve this problem. He replied that it is important to solve it. Major issue for the village. And WF is large landowner in town and could easily be the owner of the land for the site.

Ron asked: Are we searching for a solution for a problem that doesn't exist? Lester: Two issues: planning for a potential catastrophe with clean water; 2) the growth question is the harder to answer.

More general discussion: The village systems are separate now. We haven't had a problem and there isn't an indication that there will be a problem. If mostly for future development for the town. Where is the potential development and if we build it, why do we think it will be work out? Grafton isn't on any growth curve.

So The big issue regarding wastewater is to prevent ground water contamination, in the aquifer. Glacial till with high permeability on School Street and a high water table—so the recipe for cross contamination is very strong. Q: is that what is taking the contaminants to the river and the aquifer is 200 feet down and hasn't seen the contamination yet? PFAS contamination in the school was found because we looked for it. Has anyone in-depth studied the aquifer for cross-contamination of waste? The PFAS chemicals are persistent.. How to pay for it? It has to be equitably. Not just the Windham Foundation. Not just the people who live in the village. We are trying to avoid an ecological, existential catastrophe. And, if we solve the problem, we get a bonus of opening up future development if needed/happens.

Ron: It is time to meet with the select board. Figure out where we stand and then meet with them. Maybe direct T&B to investigate the safety of the water in the aquifer.

The PC raised another issue is the use of the waste water system by AirBnbs. I you have 8 people in a 2-bedroom house.

Motion passed: Matt will contact the Chair of the Select Board to arrange for a joint meeting toward the end of August. It was agree that we need more information about the Living Machine before meeting with them.

We would like to meet with Hannah before the SB joint meeting and we agreed to invite her to July meeting. We asked Bob Donald to find out the amount of whey produced by the cheese factory

5. Upcoming zoom of ANR municipal vulnerability index meeting. Developing a way of coping with municipal planning and emergency planning re: vulnerabilities caused by climate change. This is about being proactive about coming problems due to climate change. It's good that ANR would be working on issues that they haven't been concerned with such as economics, housing, and the aquifer (rather than just surface water quality). Peggy Samuels attended the zoom for me and her notes are attached.

6. DRB meeting to vote on Brailsford subdivision on Thurs 6/22

7. No unfinished business except minutes from May 9

8. No New Business

9. No Public Comment

10. Next scheduled meeting is Tues July 11

11. Meeting adjourned 8:30