

Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project

Update #3

To: Waitsfield Selectboard
From: Joshua Schwartz, MRV Planning District
CC: Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project Team Members
Annie Decker-Dell'Isola, Waitsfield Town Admin.
JB Weir, Waitsfield Planning & Zoning Admin.
Randy Brittingham, Waitsfield Town Treasurer/Grant Admin.
Bob Cook, Waitsfield Planning Commissioner
Chach Curtis, Waitsfield Selectboard Member
Robin Morris, Waitsfield Water Commissioner
Jon Ashley, DuBois & King
Date: May 26, 2023
Re: Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project Update #3

This serves as the third regular update on the Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project, a task I'm carrying out in my role as Planning Coordination Team Lead (as articulated in the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Town of Waitsfield and the Mad River Valley Planning District for the Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project*). The purpose of these updates is to ensure the Waitsfield Selectboard and Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project Team Members are abreast of project status and developments, summarizing activities over the preceding weeks. This update follows Update #1 (4.14.23) and Update #2 (5.5.23)

Recent Activities

Project Coordination Team (PCT)

- Meetings: 5.8, 5.15, 5.22 (upcoming: 5.30, 6.6)
- Activities:
 - The intended 5.22 Selectboard Meeting was postponed to 5.30, but will still include an overall project update and preliminary overview of the draft PER recommendations and findings to be presented at the 6.5 Selectboard meeting.
 - JB reached out to Tom Brown re: income eligibility threshold request, who responded by saying that it was still in process – definitive response forthcoming.
 - Clarifying funding and timing strategy for Final Design stage with DEC. In order to meet the 6.30 CWSRF funding application deadline, it will need VT DEC certification, ESA agreement, project scope, etc. for Selectboard review at its 6.26 Meeting.

Engineering/Technical Team (ETT)

- Meetings: 5.11, 5.17, 5.25 (upcoming 6.1)
- Activities:
 - Explored elements of the PER analysis work, discussing various elements, identifying project priorities, and drafting potential recommendations.
 - Jon Ashley provided a summary of wastewater treatment alternatives, group explored collection system options, and undertook an analysis of wastewater flows.
 - Explored funding avenues for potential future water connections.
 - D&K submitted a draft PER on 5.23. The ETT met on 5.25 to review the preliminary PER draft with D&K. Requested edits to the draft are being submitted to the engineer by 5.31 and will include any relevant feedback received at the 5.30 meeting as well.

- The Finding of Now Significant Impact (FNSI) Hearing, a requirement of the PER effort and originally proposed to take place in late May, has been postponed as we are still awaiting feedback from VT Division of Historic Preservation.
- Recently, Joshua identified discrepancies between the VT Downtown Board Approved Map for Waitsfield Village Center and the digital layers on the Planning Atlas and the Geodata Portal map. Highlighted these discrepancies to ACCD staff, who worked quickly to and amend the incorrect data layers on 5.25.

Funding Team (FT)

- Meetings: 5.5, 5.10, 5.11
- Activities:
 - Draft 2023 Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) Intended Use Plan (IUP)
 - The draft 2023 CWSRF IUP, and its included Priority List (PList), is anticipated to be released in late May 2023 (and posted at the link below). To date, the draft has yet to be released. Once available, it will be open for public comment for at least 30 days and include a public hearing June 2023. DEC staff recommend Waitsfield review and participate in the draft CWSRF IUP review process. The Final CWSRF IUP will likely be adopted in July 2023.
 - <https://dec.vermont.gov/water-investment/water-financing/srf/intended-use-plans>
 - Step 2 Funding: CWSRF - Final Design
 - 6.30 deadline
 - Have application to SB by 6.26, which requires Jon Ashley to create an ESA, project cost summary, DEC certification, funding application, and scope in advance.
 - Northern Borders Regional Commission's (NBRC) Catalyst Program | Deadline: 6.2
 - Town of Waitsfield's Wastewater Infrastructure Letter of Interest (LOI) for \$3,000,000 was one of three LOIs that were invited to the full application stage (out of 14 LOIs from Washington County).
 - The infrastructure project was deemed as demonstrating the program's "multi-jurisdictional" eligibility criteria, allowing it to be considered for an award up to \$3,000,000 (otherwise the project would only be eligible for an award up to \$1,000,000).
 - The Funding Team has been hard at work developing a full Catalyst Program application (due 6.2). <https://www.nbrc.gov/content/Catalyst>
 - Community Recovery and Revitalization Grant Program (CRRP)
 - Joshua & JB met with Angie Farrington, VEPC Program Manager, on 5.5 to explore funding options, and had a follow-up meeting on 5.10. They were informed that the program was unlikely to be a good fit for the project's Final Design phase, which was the initial request, as they prefer to focus on capital expenses. As an alternative, additional water connections are being explored as a potential fit. A follow-up meeting is being scheduled for 5.30.
 - CRRP awards up to \$1,000,000 or 20% of total eligible project costs.
 - <https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/community-recovery-and-revitalization-program>
 - Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation (CVEDC)
 - Joshua has been coordinating with Melissa Bounty, CVEDC's new Executive Director, in regards to various project funding avenues.
 - Final Design Costs
 - Updated project costs, including Final Design costs, will be shared as part of the 5.30 presentation.
 - Due to availability of funding and timing, it's anticipated that subsidized funding is likely to cover only a portion of Final Design costs (resulting in the balance to be covered through CWSRF loans, requiring a municipal bond vote) and the FT is actively exploring all funding options. The 5.30 presentation will include some initial ideas for how to approach funding the Design phase.

Public Outreach Team (POT)

- Meetings: 5.8, 5.22
- Activity:
 - Website Update

- Annie is taking the lead on creating a new Wastewater Planning Project page, to include a narrative, project timeline, key meeting dates, etc.
- Valley Reporter Interview
 - Annie & Joshua were interviewed by Lisa Loomis on 5.22 about the Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project status and next steps. The resultant article ran in the most recent Valley Reporter (Vol. 52, No. 6)
 - "What to expect at next week's wastewater hearing." The Valley Reporter, 5.25.23, p.1.
- 5.30 Selectboard Meeting
 - This will primarily be the Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project Community Update Meeting. Timing of this meeting is to ensure broad project understanding in advance of the subsequent Final PER delivery and ETT Recommendation to the Selectboard at its meeting of 6.5.
 - Annie & Joshua are preparing outreach materials and a project update presentation.

Updated Timeline of Near-Term Activities

- 5.30 - SB Mtg, Project update including time for questions and discussion
- 6.2 - NBRC Application Deadline
- 6.5 - Latest PER draft and board action on ETT recommendation,
- 6.9 - Final PER Released
- 6.26 - SB Mtg, CWSRF Final Design application material review
- 6.30 - CWSRF funding request submission for Final Design
- TBD - Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) Hearing (*a component of the required environmental review of the project*)

Feel free to reach out with any questions, thoughts, and/or ideas.