

The Windham Town Council and the Portland Water District Board of Trustees met remotely on Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

A roll call of members of the Town Council and The Board of Trustees was taken. Portland Water District Trustee Burns was absent. Councilor Jones was absent.

Councilor Kalogerakis moved and Councilor Douglass seconded a motion to begin the discussion.

Town Manager Barry Tibbetts began the presentation. The Manager gave a wastewater history, beginning in 2012, of the wastewater system options explored for the North Windham area. Beginning in 2015, solutions explored focused on high nitrogen levels and ways to address this.

A map was presented reflecting wastewater needs in the North Windham area. The map showed 3 subareas showing where waste disposal needed to be addressed. In 2018 and 2019 the Town explored Chaffin Pond and Manchester Drive areas as disposal sites. Working with DEP, the Town found that disposing of wastewater in this area of Town was extremely challenging. Neither of the sites explored could handle the volume of water that had to be disposed of. Through the Town's engineers, Wright Pierce, the Town learned of a new disposal system it might be able to use called a wick. Although never permitted by the DEP in Maine, DEP indicated interest in the wick solution; this type of system has been approved in Massachusetts. The wick system has the capability to handle the volume of wastewater that is generated in the North Windham area.

In this area of Town, there are suitable soils for a wick system, and it appears to be a viable solution. Several states have used this technology, including Massachusetts and Texas. The Manager went on to describe a wick and how it works. A wick has a tiny footprint and requires high-permeability soils. Installation is done through drilling, similar to drilling for a well.

The Town has explored the wick system in discussion with staff at PWD.

Donna Katsiaficas, Corporate Counsel for the Water District explained the Memorandum of Understanding. She explained the nature of the District's charter and its obligations to treat waste and intercept it in its territory, which includes North Windham. The MOU lays out the basic obligations of each party from the obligations for design and bidding to the creation of a new sewer District.

This project is a 4-5 year project.

Board President Cote asked about the sewer district to be created and asked if there were domestic wells in the area. Mr. Crovo, Director of Asset Management and Planning for the District, said the area is pretty well served by PWD in the area. Along the shores of the side ponds, there may be wells. Mr. Cote asked if it would be possible to require people to be hooked

up to public water in the future a part of the project; Mr. Crovo said that would be possible. Councilor Nadeau said there are a few houses still on wells in the area around the lake. Councilor Nadeau also noted that the water coming out of the wick system would be of good quality- almost potable. The system explored can be operated off site.

Councilor Nangle noted that the businesses in this area of North Windham are clamoring for a solution, including 2 laundromats that have large septic systems. The proposed system will assist in developing the area. It will be easy to have people sign up. The biggest thing will be the cost to the voters.

The Manager said talks have occurred with businesses who want to develop in this area. They have not been able to do so without a wastewater treatment solution.

Councilor Haskell asked how much water will be transported in 24 hours. He also asked where the nutrients were going to go- the solids? The Manager noted that more testing and analysis will be occurring as part of this process, and the question as to how much water will be moving through will be answered at a different time. Mr. Crovo said DEP will likely require that a pilot of the wicks be conducted. More than 1 wick may be required in order to move a volume of water. As far as solids, the biosolids coming out from the plant will be shipped and handled in the same way biosolids are handled at other PWD locations. The Town Engineer, Mark Arienti agreed.

Councilor Haskell asked about the costs to the Town, and the cost to citizens of hooking up to the system. The Manager noted that those costs will be addressed in the future after more study.

Councilor Kalogerakis noted he was in full support of this solution. He is excited about this project and believes it will be helpful for the town.

Councilor Maxfield noted that there is a positive environmental impact in approving a solution for the treatment of wastewater in this area, in addition to the economic development benefits. This type of system can help Windham grow and grow smartly.

Both the Town Council and the Board of Trustees are scheduled to consider the MOU at their respective May 26 meetings.

Ms. Lewis, General Manager of PWD said PWD is excited to do this project and looks forward to continuing to work with the Town. Barry Tibbetts echoed the positive sentiments of Ms. Lewis.

Councilor Nangle asked if there are grant opportunities to fund this system. Ms. Lewis said both entities should keep their eyes open for such opportunities. Mr. Tibbetts noted he had some discussions with people regarding federal funding and that there may be opportunities out there for funding.

A motion from Councilor Nangle seconded by Councilor Kalogerakis to adjourn was made, a roll call of the Council taken, and the meeting was adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Submitted by,

Donna M. Katsiaficas, Esq.  
Clerk, Portland Water District