

COMPREHENSIVE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)

November 7, 2007 – 2:00 pm
Town Hall Annex Meeting Room
George Ryder Road, West Chatham, Massachusetts

PRESENT:

CAC: Phil Christophe, Fred Jensen, David MacAdam, John Raye, Burt Segall, and John Payson

CAC members not present: Bob DePatie, John Randall, Didi Lovett, Chuck Pollard, Scott Tappan

TAG: Bob Duncanson, Bill Redfield; Nate Weeks of Stearns & Wheler

Others Present: Al Havens, Bill Schweizer, Michael Berg

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 pm.

Continuation of discussion by CAC members of Stearns & Wheler's responses to the written comments submitted by CAC members regarding the Preliminary Draft of the CWMP.

Fred Jensen indicated that this meeting would be a continuation of the agenda from the October 25 meeting with plans to hear questions from those committee members who had not been heard at that meeting: David MacAdam, John Payson and Fred Jensen.

(For purposes of brevity, the questions/concerns expressed by each CAC member will be noted in summary form with the *response and related discussion shown in italics*; page #'s refer to the Oct. 17, 2007 Draft Response to CAC Comments Memorandum)

David MacAdam had prepared a five-page response to the comments by Stearns & Wheler. Copies of this were distributed to the committee. In reviewing the highlights, the following points were made:

- The plan is written for the regulatory agencies, not for the citizens of Chatham; therefore, he suggested that the intended audience be described in the introduction.
- The report noted that the scope of the project had changed over the years, but the scope of the change or description of the change was not provided.
- The report included a statement that the “chronology was misleading” which was not explained.
- In reference to composting toilets, David MacAdam indicated that his intention had been to suggest their use as a temporary solution in situations where septic systems have failed and sewer is not yet available.

Bob Duncanson questioned this statement with regard to the meaning of “temporary.” He also noted that composting toilets are currently legal but have found limited public acceptance.

- TMDL's are the primary focus of the report, a fact that should receive greater emphasis.
- Concern was expressed about project timing and the continued deterioration of water quality during the years before project completion.

There was some discussion of this issue. There is no easy solution to the problem of inactivity in some areas except to accelerate the project, an option which could be financially impossible. In considering project speed vs. financial expenditures it has been generally agreed that 20 years is a reasonable time span for Phase 1 (to meet the TMDLs). It is conceivable that DEP will not agree with these timelines, but at this point they have not expressed any problems with the proposed schedule.

Bob Duncanson indicated that other towns may be uncomfortable with our CWMP as Chatham appears to be setting the bar quite high. He also noted that the Town could decide to move faster in the future if the fiscal situation allows.

Fred Jensen expressed his opinion that the plan should be brought before the voters in its entirety rather than merely as requests for funding of various aspects of the plan. Bob Duncanson indicated that the level of implementation detail the public would want to see is not yet available as we are attempting to maximize our flexibility to respond to environmental issues, economic redevelopment efforts, highway projects, etc. We still have two years to decide where to start; the regulatory agencies currently don't have a concern about where we begin, however, that could change. The primary concern of the regulators is that a commitment has been made to solve the nitrogen problem.

Bill Schweizer noted that the average citizen doesn't have the knowledge or background to evaluate the project so a vote at Town Meeting would be essentially meaningless.

Bob Duncanson stated that we have already sought money for the preliminary design which received unanimous support at Town Meeting. Public hearings will provide opportunities to educate and inform the public about the project.

- David MacAdam, returning to the five-page list of responses, stated that town-wide sewerage seems to limit opportunities to cut costs through the use of innovative alternatives.

Fred Jensen asked about the cost of IA systems. Nate Weeks noted that they are quite expensive, but most importantly, they don't remove enough nitrogen to meet the TMDL requirements. Burt Segall noted that IA systems present a difficult monitoring challenge as they must be monitored by a laboratory. Bob Duncanson noted that one of the major issues related to widespread use of IA systems is management to ensure they function as intended; there is also a major concern over seasonal use.

- David MacAdam reiterated an earlier statement that we have not thoroughly investigated alternative technologies; therefore, he is not convinced that sewerage is the best and/or only solution.

Nate Weeks said that this concern needs to be discussed in detail. He noted that we have a TMDL constraint which has guided the project. We have evaluated the performance of alternative technologies and sewerage is the only option that will meet the TMDL

requirements. Bob Duncanson explained that we have looked at alternative solutions including Title V systems, IA Systems, cluster systems. Bill Redfield noted that we have been monitoring the results of alternative technologies at the Otis Test site but to date none seem to be producing adequate results. Nate Weeks said that the sewer proposal has been carefully designed and the treatment plant will be expandable to meet future needs. The target removal level of 3 mg/L in the final effluent is the current state-of-the-art in wastewater treatment. An alternative treatment system that will achieve the needed TMDLs (other than sewerage) currently does not exist.

Fred Jensen noted that the sewerage option will not only benefit the estuaries, but will benefit freshwater ponds as well. Bob Duncanson added that there will also be a benefit to ground water supplies.

It was noted that DEP has determined the TMDL's. Bob Duncanson noted that in Massachusetts there is more science involved in determining the TMDL's than in most states. Nate Weeks cited similar program in Long Island Sound which were not as well structured scientifically.

- David MacAdam expressed concerns re. the “status quo” noting that many future factors/catastrophic events could change our ability to complete the project or complete it as planned. He cited weather-related issues and economic impacts of same.

Bob Duncanson responded that the use of “Adaptive Management” will enable us to respond to changing situations. Bill Redfield said that we plan for catastrophic events to the extent possible and indicated that the new sewer lines, pumping stations, etc. will also be planned accordingly. David MacAdam stated that we need to acknowledge the possibility of catastrophic events affecting the project and include that acknowledgement in the plan.

- A schedule should be included in the plan.

There was discussion of the amount of detail and decisions regarding priorities which have not yet been made. Presenting a schedule for work in specific watershed areas would decrease flexibility in the future. David MacAdam indicated that the schedule could be included with notations that it is “subject to change.” Bob Duncanson agreed to try to create a schedule.

Fred Jensen suggested that it might be helpful to include a discussion of the philosophy regarding which areas would be first based on TMDL requirements and water quality. Bill Redfield cautioned against including too much detail in the plan as DEP can convert a planning tool into a regulatory tool. Bob Duncanson agreed to include some description of the philosophy of how the plan prioritized areas and explain how decisions were made.

- David MacAdam expressed concern about the role of CAC members in the Town Meeting voting/approval process. If voting will be to grant money over a period of many years, what is the role of the CAC?

Nate Weeks explained that in other towns, the CAC members voice opinions and ask questions as new issues arise. They are respected and provide leadership for the community.

It is important to explain in the CWMP that it is designed for presentation to the regulatory agencies.

Bob Duncanson suggested that the CAC members begin thinking about what should be included in a public informational brochure.

Burt Segall suggested that the Executive Summary of the CWMP could be improved and written in more understandable language. He also suggested the inclusion of specific information about costs to individual homeowners.

Bob Duncanson said that the TAG and Sterns & Wheler would review David MacAdam's comments and respond to them in writing.

Fred Jensen's and John Payson's comments will be presented at the next meeting. John Payson provided several handouts regarding TMDL's for review by committee members prior to the next meeting. It was noted that Mass. DEP has changed the TMDLs and these new numbers will be presented in a public hearing. John Payson indicated that we cannot proceed until we learn the outcome/impact of these changes. Bob Duncanson indicated that he would be in touch with DEP and would invite them to the next meeting to answer questions.

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, November 28, 2007 at 4 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.

Marie Williams
Recorder