

WESTFIELD SELECTBOARD SPECIAL MEETING

Minutes

September 9th, 2025 – 5 p.m.

Westfield Community Center, 59 North Hill Road

Meeting Recordings Available to View at <https://www.youtube.com/@TownofWestfieldVT>

Town Officials Present: Jacques Couture, Selectboard Chair; Richard Degre, Selectboard (By Zoom); Dennis Vincent, Selectboard; LaDonna Dunn, Town Clerk; Mike Piper, Constable; Shelley Martin, Town Health Officer

Others Present: Jimmy Crawford; Joyce Crawford; Corey Alix; Daniel McAvinney; Jennifer Grace; Pat Sagui (Partial Attendance, By Zoom); Lynnette Claudon, VT Department of Environmental Conservation

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1. **Call Meeting to Order – Jacques Couture, Chair:** Jacques Couture called the meeting to order at 5PM. Jacques reminded everyone to sign in and noted that the meeting was being recorded.
 2. **Public Comment – 5 Minutes:** Jacques noted a change in the order for questions. Questions directed at Lynnette were to be asked after her presentation and general questions about the Village Wastewater Study could be asked after questions for Lynnette were finished.
 3. **Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda:** No additions or deletions were made.
 4. **Presentation by Lynnette Claudon – “Case Studies in Community Wastewater”:** Jacques introduced Lynnette Claudon and explained that her presentation was not directly related to the current Village Wastewater Study happening in Westfield but would give some good information about wastewater projects in other Vermont towns.

Lynnette began by showing a map of villages in Vermont that have no Sewage Treatment Facilities. She noted that the affordability metric the state looks at is the annual user rate divided by the median household income and the percentage should be between 1 to 2% to be considered affordable. She showed an example from the town of Warren and with a total project cost of over \$4 million dollars where the user fee ended up being \$1,180 per year. The next town she showed was Brownsville and their end user fee is \$865 per year. The rates for Brownsville are lower due to location of another town's existing system and the ability to connect their systems together. Grafton decided they could not afford to construct a wastewater system and instead created an ordinance requiring property owners in the village area to have their septic tanks pumped periodically. She then noted that the state has loan programs for homeowners who need to replace their septic systems and don't have the funds up front to do so. She then discussed some of the benefits of wastewater systems. She noted various privacy concerns that may come up over the course of a wastewater study. She noted a few keys to successful projects including a strong wastewater committee, visioning, capacity, funding and affordability. She then talked about Westford, which is a town who had a fully funded project ready to be implemented, but due to a lot of pushback within the community the Selectboard decided not to go forward with the project. There are a variety of ways communities can go about getting a wastewater system and it can take decades to get through the process completely.

5. Question and Answer Period:

Daniel McAvinney questioned if these systems would treat all water leaving a home, graywater as well as blackwater. Lynnette noted that the state does not differentiate between the two.

LaDonna Dunn questioned what a legacy system was. Lynnette noted that the legacy systems are systems that were put in place prior to the new regulations.

Shelley Martin asked if Lynnette has seen the current study being done in Westfield and where the study is currently at. Lynnette noted that she has seen the 30% report from AES Northeast, which highlights mostly the basic information about the town and the current septic systems. Shelley questioned what her opinion of it is and noted that the map of the village area seemed to show a lot of challenges for putting in a system. Lynnette noted that it does not show any more challenges than other towns have faced.

Jennifer Grace questioned when the public can see the report from the study. LaDonna noted that the report goes to the state first for approval and once it is sent back to the town it will be available for the public to view.

Jacques Couture noted that he walked the village area with AES Northeast to get GPS coordinates of where the current septic tanks are. While they were getting this information people enquired about when they will see the report and he explained that there is a 30% report, which is currently being reviewed by the state, a 60% report, a 90% report and a final report. The 60% report will happen in December 2025. He also noted that the Selectboard is not pushing for a wastewater system, they are just doing a feasibility study. The study is fully funded by a forgivable loan for \$125,000. It will not cost the town any money to do this study. At the end of the study options will be given based on the studies findings and the town can decide whether to go forward with one of the options or not to pursue this any further.

Joyce Crawford questioned if a system would go out to the public for a vote. Jacques noted that it would and would be done before any town funds are paid towards a system.

Shelley Martin questioned what happens if the study shows certain obstacles, would they give options on how to overcome those obstacles. Jacques noted that the study should give two to three potential options. Lynnette noted that some studies have come back with no viable options and with a recommendation to continue the study and if any land becomes available for purchase.

Joyce Crawford questioned if there was a town parcel that they are looking at for the system to go onto or if they would connect with the Troy wastewater system. Jacques noted that the study is going to investigate all of these options. He reiterated that it would be up to the voters in town to pursue any of the options or not to pursue any of them. She then questioned if it would be just for the village and would every taxpayer have to burden the cost. Dennis Vincent noted that the map that was shown is where the system could potentially service. The map is of the Village Designation Center with a ¼ mile buffer around that. This is again something the study will explain in more detail. Jacques noted that the town would not have pursued this study if it wasn't fully funded.

Joyce Crawford questioned when the next wastewater meeting will be held. LaDonna noted that the 60% meeting will be held in December. Joyce questioned if it would be available to view on Zoom. LaDonna noted that it would be and that the recordings of the meetings are available on YouTube to view afterwards. She also noted that there is a page on the town's website that is for the Village Wastewater Study, and all the meeting recordings and minutes that pertain to the Wastewater Study are linked there. She noted that the Zoom link is at the top of each agenda, or you can go to Zoom.com and enter the meeting ID and passcode. She explained that the meeting minutes and agendas are also posted on the website on the meeting minutes/agendas page.

Jennifer Grace questioned how the water bill she receives four times a year factors in, what happens if the town hooks into the Troy wastewater system and what happens if there are failed systems in the village. Jacques felt this is unable to be answered until the study is finished. He did note that it would most likely come with a cost but it's unknown at this time what that would

be. She then questioned if the water bill would go away if a wastewater system was put in. It was noted that the water bills are separate from this and would not be joined with any wastewater system.

Shelley Martin questioned when any funding would be applied for if the town decides to go forward with a project. She also wondered if the funding available is on a first come first serve basis and could run out. Lynnette explained that it depends on the funds you are trying to get, and it may take a while to get approved for some of them. She also noted that the fastest system to be put in still took around 5-7 years to be completed, this is not going to be a fast process.

Joyce Crawford questioned how much of the funding for a project could be covered by the grants and other funding sources. Lynnette noted that it depends on the project. She explained that towns lately have had small steps in the process funded at 100% and that could be one way to go rather than trying to fund the full scope of the project right from the start. She then noted that the full project could get funded at 90-100% depending on the funds available at the time. Joyce then questioned what the cost to the taxpayers would be if a project was fully funded. Jacques noted that if the project was fully funded the users would still pay a monthly cost for the system that would go towards maintenance and upkeep, similar to the water system in town. Joyce then mentioned the cost of having a full-time employee running the wastewater system. Lynnette noted that she works with towns to help guide them on what grants are available and what to apply for when doing a project like this.

Jennifer Grace questioned if the grants are given based on the need of the town, if one town has higher flooding concerns, would they be more likely to receive a grant over a town whose flooding is not as concerning. Lynnette noted that some grants are based on need, but there are many grants available, and all have different ways of dispersing funds. There are also grants that get released with a focus on certain criteria.

Lynnette then clarified that the employee she mentioned in her slides would be someone who is committed to working through this project with the town and the more committed this person is, the better the chance of success for the project. Jacques clarified that the person she was discussing would be to work through the part of the project to get a system in place, not for the operation of the system after it is set up. Lynnette clarified that is what she meant. She explained that during the project process the town could decide who or how they want the system run after it is finished. She also noted that people who currently work in the Town Office could be the people helping the town work through the project setup, it does not have to be a separate person.

Joyce Crawford questioned why the town began the Wastewater Study to begin with. Jacques explained that legislature passed a law allowing accessory dwellings on smaller lots, which could lead to more wastewater system needs. When the Selectboard found out there was funding available to do a study at no cost to the town they decided to move forward with it. Jacques also noted that this has been discussed for quite a while and has been discussed previously at Town Meeting. Dennis then explained that it took almost a year to get the contract with the engineers approved and signed because the Selectboard was not happy with some of the wording in the original contract and wanted to make sure there would be no additional cost to taxpayers. Richard Degre reiterated that they made sure there was no cost to taxpayers to fund this study.

It was noted that the presentation was very helpful. Presentation slides and the meeting recording and minutes will be available on the town's website.

6. Other Business: No other business.

7. Adjourn: Dennis motioned to adjourn at 6:05PM, Richard seconded. Motion passed.

Westfield Selectboard Approval Date: _____ **with** _____ **change(s)**

X

Jacques Couture
Selectboard Chair

X

Richard Degre
Selectboard

X

Dennis Vincent
Selectboard

DRAFT