

WESTFIELD VILLAGE WASTEWATER STUDY PUBLIC MEETING (3rd of 3)

Minutes

April 23rd, 2026 @ 6:00 p.m.

Westfield Community Center, 59 North Hill Road

Town Officials Present: Jacques Couture, Selectboard Chair; Richard Degre, Selectboard; Dennis Vincent, Selectboard; Niki Dunn, Town Clerk; Lisa Deslandes, Treasurer

Others Present: Kevin Farrington, AES Northeast; Lynnette Claudon, VT Department of Environmental Conservation (Via Zoom); Jan Degre, John Hamelin, Mike Saloomy, Jennifer Grace, Shelley Martin, Dan McAvinney, Christine Neuhardt, Pat Collins, Kelli Dean, Scott Dean, Loren Petzoldt, Corey Hutson, Achouak Arfaoui (Via Zoom)

1. **Call Meeting to Order – Jacques Couture, Chair:** Jacques Couture brought the meeting to order at 6PM.

2. **Introductions/Opening Statement: Jacques Couture:** Jacques Couture introduced Kevin Farrington from AES Northeast who began his presentation.

a. **Pass around Sign-in Sheet:** Sign-in sheet was passed around to all attendees.

3. **Preliminary Engineering Report – Kevin R. Farrington, P.E. Partner / Director of Civil Engineering at AES Northeast:** Kevin Farrington began by introducing himself and Lynnette Claudon from the VT Department of Environmental Conservation who joined the meeting via Zoom. He also noted that there was a printout of the slideshow available for attendees. Public comments and questions had been received prior to the meeting, and he noted attendees could ask questions throughout the presentation to make sure all questions got answered during the meeting.

a. **Review of 60% Progress Report:** He began going over why the study was being done. The study is to help the town evaluate long term wastewater solutions and is a proactive planning effort. He went over the study area again, which includes 71 parcels, 83 ERU's (Equivalent Residential Unit) and would handle 35,000 gallons a day.

b. **Overview of 90% Progress Report:** Kevin noted that since the 60% report they have reviewed public comments, determined a preferred alternative, updated the project cost review and looked at affordability considerations.

He discussed the 2% affordability benchmark, which determines whether a project is affordable for residents or not. He noted that the census data they used for the median income for Westfield is taken for the entire town, not the village residents. It was discussed that this median income number (\$90,625) is higher than it would be if only the residents in the study area were polled.

Jennifer Grace questioned if this factored in the grants that would cover this program. Kevin noted that they have not accounted for grants at this point. He made a point that no funds have been secured and the town should not move forward with anything until funds have been secured.

Kevin then went over the capital cost comparison of the two alternatives that were discussed at the previous 60% progress meeting. The cost of alternative 1, pump to Troy, is \$9,211,032, and the cost for alternative 2, on-site treatment, is \$10,847,670. The third alternative is to take no action at all. The annual operating and maintenance costs for alternative 1 are \$54,400 and for alternative 2 they are \$148,400.

Given the information on costs, it was determined that the preferred alternative would be alternative 1, pump to Troy pump station. It has a lower cost and uses existing regional treatment infrastructure.

Corey Hutson questioned if the Troy system can handle the additional flow of Westfield. It was explained that they are oversized already and can handle the extra flow. Jacques Couture noted that they had already spoken with them a few years ago and they said they could handle the extra amount.

Kevin then discussed affordability. He showed 4 scenarios, and the two best scenarios would be 80% grants, 20% loans and 90% grants, 10% loans. With 80% of the capital cost covered by grants it would leave a monthly ERU cost of \$137, which is 1.8% of the median household income. With 90% of the capital cost covered by grants it would leave a monthly ERU cost of \$96, which is 1.3% of the median household income. Shelley Martin noted that the percent of income is incorrect as the median household income for the village area would be lower. Kevin felt they could use a sensitivity analysis to determine a better median household income. Christine Neuhardt felt that they should get the correct numbers of the household income before presenting the information so that it is more accurate.

Kelli Dean questioned how these monthly costs are affected by people joining or leaving the system. Kevin noted that with only 71 users it's a very small number of households for a large system cost like this. He noted that affording a system like this is going to be difficult for an area consisting of 71 parcels. If there were more people on the system the cost per user would go down.

Dennis Vincent questioned if a town got a 100% forgivable loan. Kevin noted those do exist. After the 90% report they will work on looking at what grants may be available.

Shelley Martin asked Lynnette Claudon if with that high of a median income would the town even qualify for grants. Lynnette noted that they can do an income survey for just the affected area and they can recalculate the costs based on the actual income in the village area. She checked to see if the census data used had data for just the village, but it did not.

Kelli Dean questioned who pays when the system fails between Westfield and Troy. Kevin noted that it would be up to Westfield to cover those costs and there would be a person who is paid to check on the system. Kevin explained that the monthly costs would go down after 30 years when the initial capital costs are paid off and then only the yearly operating and maintenance costs need to be covered by the system users.

Jacques Couture questioned if the per gallon allocation cost that Westfield would pay to Troy is factored into the monthly cost. Kevin noted that this is more of an implementation phase discussion, but they did factor in a number for the allocation cost for the purpose of the study.

John Hamelin felt showing a breakdown of the \$54,000 yearly costs would help to see what goes toward the allocation to Troy and what goes toward repairs.

Shelley Martin questioned if that cost included paying an employee to monitor the system. Kevin noted that it does, but it wouldn't need to be monitored daily, and it would have an alarm system to let the person know if there was a failure.

Dennis Vincent questioned if solids are separated at the individual properties or the pump station. Kevin noted that traditional systems would not be needed and solids would be taken care of in Troy.

Kelli Dean questioned if you would have to join the system, especially if you have a working system already. Kevin noted that is more of an implementation question, and this is only a planning phase. He noted the town would need to make that decision and it may be governed by some type of ordinance.

Jennifer Grace questioned if this is still a feasibility study when this is at the 90% completion phase. Kevin explained that this is truly just a feasibility study. It is a planning level study, to determine if there is a feasible option and if there is what it would cost. This study also determines if that cost is feasible for the number of users on the system. He noted that next the Town would investigate what grant funding is available. If they then decided to move forward, there would need to be some type of town vote before starting any type of implementation.

Kevin noted that the 90% grant funded option is the only option that would even come close to being affordable. He also noted that the town can do nothing, although this won't help with long-term planning.

Jennifer Grace questioned if Act 250 is what is really pushing this on towns. Kevin noted that this is a planning level initiative. He does understand that this is not very affordable for this small of a group of people.

Mike Saloomey questioned why Westfield was chosen for this. He feels that Troy wants Westfield to buy-in because they overcommitted to too large of a system and there are much bigger towns that could be doing this. Kevin noted that these studies are being done in towns all over the state, even towns of a similar size. Jennifer Grace noted that Montgomery is doing a wastewater project also and they have had cost overruns already. It was noted by the Selectboard that Westfield was not chosen for this study, the board decided to pursue this study when the funding became available to cover the full cost of the study.

Shelley Martin noted that there is no room in downtown Westfield for any urban sprawl. Jacques Couture noted that all of the land around the village is conserved already. Jacques Couture explained that the state is funding these types of studies because of the change in laws allowing accessory dwellings on smaller lots like the village lots. Currently in the village if you wanted to add an accessory dwelling you may not have room to put in a larger septic system, but with a village wastewater system you could add that dwelling because you would be connected to the village system.

Kelli Dean questioned who gets to vote when it comes time to vote. Jacques Couture felt that was a good question and there is uncertainty over who votes. Shelley questioned if the whole town is paying for the infrastructure, then the whole town should vote, and if it's only the people on the system then only those people should vote.

Corey Hutson questioned how businesses fall into this. Kevin noted that businesses would typically account for two ERU's where a single-family home would be 1 ERU. Jacques Couture noted that an apartment building could be more ERU's.

Corey Hutson questioned if the town buildings on the system would also need to pay. It was noted that they would, just like they pay for water.

Jacques Couture noted that the costs could be completely different from the estimates shown in the study. Kevin noted that there also needs to be a detailed design done first, which would be an additional cost.

- c. **Next Steps:** Kevin noted that as with the previous reports they have passed the 90% report along to the state to review and offer any comments. The final report will be available around August of 2026 and then it will be up to the town and the Selectboard whether to hold any type of vote regarding moving forward with a project like this.

Lynnette Claudon discussed grants. She noted that there are some limitations with an alternative that would be pumping to another town's pump station. There would be federal grants available for this, but they only allow a maximum of 80% grant funding, requiring the town to pay 20% of the funding. The 20% funding could possibly be taken as a loan through the state's Clean Water Revolving Fund. The federal grant dollars are all down quite a bit this year due to an earmark program that pulls money out of the appropriation dollars before they are sent to the states.

4. Community Engagement:

a. Schedules and Key Milestones:

- i. **Final Report (August 2026):**
- ii. **Public Vote (TBD):**

- 5. **Public Comments and Questions:** These were answered throughout the meeting.
- 6. **Adjourn:** Dennis Vincent motioned to adjourn at 7:30PM, Richard Degre seconded. Motion passed.

Westfield Selectboard Approval Date: 5/12/26 with Ø change(s)

X Jacques Couture
Jacques Couture
Selectboard Chair

X Richard Degre
Richard Degre
Selectboard

X Dennis Vincent
Dennis Vincent
Selectboard