

**WESTFIELD SELECTBOARD
VILLAGE WASTEWATER STUDY PUBLIC MEETING**

Minutes

July 24th, 2025 – 6 p.m.

Westfield Community Center, North Hill

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

Town Officials Present: Jacques Couture, Selectboard Chair; Dennis Vincent, Selectboard; LaDonna Dunn, Town Clerk; Pat Sagui, Moderator; Lisa Deslandes, Treasurer; Niki Dunn, Selectboard Clerk; Mike Piper, Constable; Michael Jacobs, Constable; Loren Petzoldt, Planning Commission & Development Review Board; Brian Dunn, Planning Commission & Development Review Board; Will Young, Zoning Administrator

Others Present: Audra Pitts, Newport Daily Express; David Wursthorn; Kevin Farrington, AES Northeast; Kalyani Mer, AES Northeast; Jeremy Dunn; Gary Sloan (Partial Attendance); Rick Danforth; Jennifer Elder (Via Zoom); John Hamelin; Thomasz Adach; Samuel Douglass, State Senator (Via Zoom); Lynette Claudon, State of Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (Via Zoom); Patrick Breault, Charles Collins (Via Zoom); Jennifer Grace

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1. **Call Meeting to Order – Jacques Couture, Chair:** Jacques Couture called the meeting to order at 6:03PM.
 2. **Introductions / Opening Statement: Jacques Couture:** Introductions were made by the speakers.
 - a. **Pass Around Sign-in Sheet:** This was done prior to the meeting beginning.
 - b. **Written Questions:** Pat Sagui explained that questions should be written down and would be collected and answered after the presentations and at the end of the meeting there would be time for comments.
 3. **Public Meeting Procedures – Pat Sagui, Moderator:** Pat explained that people would have 2 minutes for questions or comments to keep the meeting flowing.
 4. **Background & Context – Selectboard: Jacques Couture; Richard Degre; Dennis Vincent:**
 - a. **Need for the Study:** Jacques presented the background reasons that the town began looking into a wastewater system. When the State passed a law allowing accessory dwellings in smaller parcels of land, such as the village this presented a possible increase in the need for septic capacity on these properties. The state had funds available for the town to do a study to see what the town's needs are for wastewater systems and what the options would be for installing a system. The town felt it would be good to take advantage of the funds available to get a study done. There is no requirement to put a system in at the end of the study. To move forward beyond the study the voters would need to approve a continuation of a wastewater project.

Rick Danforth questioned who would be voting on the system, the whole town or just the people who would be on the system. Jacques explained that at this time there is no answer to that. It may be determined in the study process.
 5. **Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation – Clean Water State Revolving Funding Program (CWSRF) – Lynette Whitney Claudon, PE / Senior Water Infrastructure Program Engineer:** Pat introduced Lynette Claudon with a background on what her job entails. She represents small towns in Vermont as their Water Program Engineer. Lynette will be coming

to give a presentation to the town in the coming weeks that will be more in depth. Lynette gave a short presentation on wastewater systems and the differences between the types. She discussed common terms used when discussing wastewater systems. She showed a graphic detailing Community Scale Septic Systems. She then explained that the town is currently in the study phase and explained the next phases that could happen after the study.

- a. **Questions:** Rick Danforth questioned if there is a meeting after each step. It was explained that there is. Jennifer Grace questioned what prompted the study, whether there were problems with septic systems in town. Jacques explained that there were no problems that came up that caused them to look into this. Jennifer Grace noted that in meeting minutes that she read she thought it was noted that there were problems with septic systems in town. Jacques noted again that there were no problems, it was mentioned that there could be issues with systems in the future due to things like the high-water table.

6. Preliminary Engineering Report – Kevin R. Farrington, PE Partner/ Director of Civil Engineering at AES Northeast and Kalyani Mer, Engineering Technician II, AES Northeast: Kevin Farrington and Kalyani Mer presented on behalf of AES Northeast. Kevin explained the steps of the process and when each report will come out.

- a. **Evaluation of Existing Conditions:** They are currently looking at data gathering regarding things like the types of soil, water table depths, etc. Kevin explained that while there may not be specific system failures that triggered the study you can assume that some of the older systems may not be working the way they should be. Replacing these systems today may be problematic and costly. Jennifer Grace asked what the current regulations are. Kevin explained that listing the current State regulations regarding wastewater systems would be lengthy. He tried to explain some of them and Jennifer asked if he was listing Vermont State regulations. He said he was and that he could send her a link to them. The regulations apply to all residents of Vermont. Kevin explained the area the study is looking at. He noted that surveys were sent out to people in this area and that they would like people to fill the surveys out if they have not already done so. Kalyani Mer explained that public input plays a large role in the study. She noted that 43% of the surveys have been returned so far. The responses help them determine what alternatives could be used. There is an underlying risk as the systems age and as we see more intense rain. AES Northeast is preparing to conduct site visits at the properties within the study area as part of their data gathering. The flags given out at the Town Office and Recycling Center will help with these site visits as they are used to mark each septic tank and the septic outlet pipe from each building. The expected wastewater volume used is estimated to be around 33,000 gallons per day, from approximately 59 residential properties, with the remaining properties being commercial or mixed-use properties. Environmental resources are one of the items looked at as part of the study. There are approximately 444 acres of wetlands in Westfield, mostly concentrated near the Missisquoi River. These areas are not good for leach field locations and wastewater disposal. There are prime agriculture soils in town which are valuable for food production and mitigation requirements may be required when putting systems near these areas. There are also conserved lands in Westfield. These lands are harder to place disposal systems on and may require special permits. These constraints will be evaluated when looking at possible disposal locations.
- b. **Alternative Analyses:** At the 60% report AES Northeast will present 2-3 possible alternatives to look at when considering a wastewater system in Westfield.

7. Community Engagement:

- a. **Schedules and Key Milestones:**

- i. **30% Report and Public Meeting (July 2025):** This is the current phase of the study. Once Lynette Claudon approves of the 30% report it will be available for public viewing.
- ii. **60% Report and Public Meeting (December 2025):** This report will be looking at identifying multiple alternatives.
- iii. **90% Report and Public Meeting (April 2026):** There will be a recommendation for a preferred alternative at this time. This will include cost estimates.
- iv. **Final Report (August 2026):** This is the final report with a preferred alternative.
- v. **Public Vote (TBD):** A public vote can be held at any time after the final report.

8. Public Comments and Questions:

Jennifer Grace submitted a list of questions to be asked. She asked again if there were septic system problems that prompted this study. She felt that the Planning Commission has been working on the wastewater system for over a year and she felt that there were problems noted in the meeting minutes from a specific Planning Commission meeting. Jacques explained again why the study was prompted. When the state passed laws about accessory dwellings being allowed on smaller parcels of land and money was available to do the study, they decided to pursue this. There were no known issues with specific systems that prompted the study.

Rick Danforth questioned who is doing the study and are any homeowners involved in the study. He explained that he is on the water system committee and knows about the layout of that system. Pat explained that people can contribute by coming to the meetings. Jacques noted that there will be a wastewater committee formed and people from town can be on the committee. It would be helpful to have someone from the water system on the committee. A few other people with an interest in this project would be helpful on the committee as well. Jacques noted that public involvement is very important. Kevin noted that mapping and infrastructure easements and personal knowledge of the water system would be very helpful.

Kevin explained that the surveys sent to property owners are purely for data gathering, not for regulatory purposes. LaDonna noted that there are flags on the table if people need them and AES Northeast will be coming around in the next few weeks to do their surveying.

John Hamelin questioned the difference between the two areas designated on the map of the proposed wastewater area. Kevin explained that the project work area is targeting the properties in the Designated Village Center and the outer circle can be looked at for potential systems. Pat explained that Westfield has a formal Designated Village Center which is where the internal line comes from. Dennis noted that the outer line is ¼ mile from the designated village center. Jacques questioned if topographical information will be looked at. Kevin noted that they are looking at that. It will be used when determining what alternatives work best.

Jennifer Grace commented that this feels very vague to her, there have been huge tax increases over the last few years, and she is not learning anything new at this meeting. She does not want to go down this road. She questioned why this was not mentioned at the last town meeting. Pat explained that she could help explain to Jennifer why this started again if she does not understand it yet. She wanted to know why people can't opt in or out and Pat noted that we are not at that point yet of determining if people would be able to opt-in or opt-out.

Rick Danforth questioned whether the Planning Commission has ever done a study on this before. Pat explained that when doing the Zoning Bylaw Revision, they saw that there could be concerns with septic systems in the future in the village. She took on the

role, as a resident of the town, to inquire with the Selectboard about whether they would like to use the money the state was offering to do a study on this.

9. **Adjourn:** Jacques thanked everyone for coming and noted that some questions may not be able to be answered at this point in the study. He also reiterated that this is just a study at this point. Loren Petzoldt noted that this is forward looking and trying to be proactive instead of reactive when systems start failing. Dennis motioned to adjourn at 7:12PM, Jacques seconded. Motion passed.

Westfield Selectboard Approval Date: 8/18/25 with Ø change(s)

X Jacques Couture
Jacques Couture
Selectboard Chair

X Richard Degre
Richard Degre
Selectboard

X Dennis Vincent
Dennis Vincent
Selectboard