

Minutes of Joint Meeting

Route 20 Sewer - Citizen's Advisory Committee and Route 20 - Sewer Steering Committee

Thursday December 15, 2011

John Baranowsky CAC, Eric Poch SC, Bob Haarde SC, Craig Blake CAC, Neil Minkoff CAC, Jonathan Lapat CAC, Kirsten Roopenian CAC, Joan Carlton SC, Stephen Grande SC, Peter Cramer CAC, Richard Cohen CAC, Peter Abair CAC, Andrew Sullivan CAC, Brian McNamara SC, Ted Pasquarello SC, Bill Cossart SC

Eric Poch called the meeting to order at 7:39 PM.

Members were advised that representatives from the Technical Advisory Committee, Jody Kablack, and the Consultant (Weston and Sampson) could not attend due to scheduling conflicts.

Approval of Minutes

December 7, 2011 Joint Meeting (Route 20-CAC and SC) Minutes discussed. Motion to approve made, seconded, and voted unanimously in favor.

November 17, 2011 Meeting (Route 20-SC) Minutes discussed. Motion to approve made, seconded, and voted unanimously in favor.

Assignment

John Baranowsky was assigned as Recording Secretary for this meeting.

Discussion

The technical discussion will be rescheduled. Likely dates include January 12 or January 19, 2012.

Two municipal sewer projects have been researched. These were presented and discussed anticipating that "lessons learned" could assist in formulating the Route 20 Sewer Project.

Chelmsford

Bob Haarde presented the Town of Chelmsford sewer project.

Chelmsford problems date back to the 1960's with the first of numerous Federal "Clean Water Act" violations. Ultimately, these problems led to a consent judgment for a facility plan to address problems to 1) eliminate ground and surface water pollution, 2) protect drinking water supplies, and 3) eliminate severe septic system problems (caused by high ground-water, poor soils and shallow-bedrock).

The full implementation of the plan resulted in complete elimination of all septic system disposal replaced by 190 miles of sewer (gravity, force-main, and low-pressure sewer). Also installed were 550 grinder pumps and forty-one pump stations. All wastewater for the 11,800 properties fronted by the collection system is treated at the Lowell Regional Wastewater Facility. Daily flow rate is 2.66 mgd.

Total construction costs are \$165 million with \$20 million in grant money making the Town's share \$145 million. SRF low interest loans receipts total \$72 million; betterment fees amount to \$26 million, while \$26 million are allocated as user fees. \$146 million was overwhelmingly approved by the Representative Town Meeting and by Prop 2-1/2 debt exemption in nine separate votes between 1984 and 2008. Currently user fees are \$3.42 per 1K gallons.

Some discussion ensued as to what extent Chelmsford zoning, soil conditions, bedrock and high water-table are comparable to like conditions in the proposed Sudbury Route 20 Sewer District.

Also discussed was the ratio of Chelmsford business to residentially zoned mix. Jon Lapat mentioned that Chelmsford has four distinct business districts some with proximity to Interstate 495 and Route 3.

Craig Blake added that the takeaway should be on total cost and components (betterments, user fees, SRF loans, taxes, and grants) suggesting some of these may be transferable to the Sudbury Route 20 project.

Chatham

Joan Carlton presented a summary the Town of Chatham sewer project.

There are two phases. Phase 1 (duration 20 years) is intended to address immediate wastewater disposal abatement needs. The duration of this phase is twenty years (2010 to 2030). Impacted resources include freshwater ponds and groundwater supply. Phase 1 construction costs total \$59 million.

Phase 2 implementation depends on Phase 1 abatement results. Phase 2 costs are estimated at \$200 million over thirty years (from 2030 to 2060).

Homeowners are expected to pay \$400/yr (average) sewer charge based on flow; the entire cost of hook-up, and property tax increase of \$480/yr over the next 50 years. No betterment fees are to be charged.

Nitrogen loading (as nitrate) on the impacted resources was highlighted as a primary cause for concern.

John Baranowsky mentioned that such is often the case when the water resource exists in sandy glacial deposits (i.e. Cape Cod and Long Island, NY) with wastewater disposal occurring directly above. Advanced wastewater treatment is typically required in such cases.

Bill Cossart (Sudbury Water District) mentioned that trace levels of trichloroethylene have been found (Well No. 2). In the past, the belief was that the Raymond Road aquifer was confined by an impervious soil layer, but that has changed. A takeaway is that the Sudbury Water District aquifer could face a similar threat from nitrate intrusion from wastewater.

One takeaway was that with the sewer a lower risk, safer, and more sustainable water resource is more likely.

General Discussion

Steve Grande commented that from a historic perspective, an oversupply of business/commercial property tends to make demand for same lower, driving down potential rental income on a cost/square foot basis. He mentioned how prospective rental tenants would look to opportunities in Marlborough and Hudson. Retail use would likely benefit from an increase on the supply-side.

Jonathan Lapat countered by stating the Home Depot (Marlborough) has not met performance expectations envisioned by Home Depot based upon traffic at their Natick store.

Andrew Sullivan questioned whether there would be sufficiently strong demand for retail space given competition from the Wayland Town Center.

Questions were raised with respect to how Wayland had addressed wastewater disposal with respect to their Town Center Project. Mention was made of a package treatment plant but no further details came forth.

Neil Minkoff mentioned that shifting of market forces tabbed at an earlier meeting as the “stability issue” remain a cause for concern.

John Baranowsky remarked that according to DEP Regulations (310 CMR 44.08), applicants for SRL funds must certify that use regulations and controls consistent with future system service requirements are in place and well documented for SRF Loan consideration. Sudbury was conditionally ranked 29th of 31 for calendar year 2011 with a rating of 80 (see Table 1 CWSRF). Bob Haarde suggested that the referenced documents could be posted to the Route 20 Sewer (CAC and Steering) websites. John Baranowsky will contact Mary McCormack who with Mark Thompson (Information Services) will facilitate document uploading.

Ted Pasquarello asked how the project would be paid for. Eric Poch responded by saying that funding sources must be secured and numerous issues resolved before this question can be definitively addressed.

District Improvement Financing (DIF) Program

Peter Abair provided a handout to support his presentation on the possibility of “District Improvement Financing (DIF), a program administered by the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC).

Peter explained that when an improvement district is created by the DIF Program, bonds are sold to finance (wholly or in part) the project. The assumption is that over time additional value is “captured” in the form of incremental property tax valuations as a result of growth in the DIF District. This derived revenue stream can then be used by the district to offset costs including repayment of all or a portion of the bonds.

One DIF District scenario would create a business park. For this concept to work, an “anchor tenant” is generally required. If the park is built before suitable tenants are found, the Town would be required to assume costs, otherwise allocations would be borne primarily by those in the district.

The program has been used widely in other states and while available to Massachusetts Cities and Towns, few instances were cited since program inception in 1993. Exceptions include projects in the Town of Westwood and the City of Worcester.

Peter noted that the program was removed by Prop 2-1/2 legislation, but later reinstated in 2003 as MGL Section 40Q.

Route 20 Visioning Document

Bob Haarde distributed a handout summarizing a likely community vision scenario for the Route 20 District. This study was sponsored by the Town of Sudbury and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development and prepared by the Cecil Group, Inc. in 1998.

Bob explained that the approach taken by the planners included defining goals and objectives by listing current major weaknesses, and then enumerating potential opportunities to overcome each of these.

Weaknesses include traffic congestion, lack of pedestrian links and open space, poor aesthetic appeal, and infrastructure issues (sewer, other utilities).

Opportunities include screened parking, pedestrian linkages, mixed-use development, more appealing architectural character, diverse business use, open space and improved traffic control.

Discussion of the visioning document presentation followed.

Whether sidewalks and bike trails were part and parcel of the vision was discussed briefly. Suppression of overhead utilities was discussed in more detail.

Suppressed telephone line budget-costs of one-million dollars per mile were suggested. Most felt that since the section of roadway within the proposed sewer district was to be disturbed (sewer), the opportunity to suppress other utilities concurrently should be pursued. Also, the various utilities built or relocated as part of the vision should be run in the same trench to the extent possible.

Questions with respect to utility suppression and combined (same trench) utility work were asked.

Bill Cossart sought clarification on limits of pressure sewer. Craig Blake clarified these details with reference to the Proposed Route 20 Sewer Site Plan.

John Baranowsky advised that DEP requires 10-foot horizontal or 18-inches vertical separation (between sewer and water) or concrete encasement.

Bob Haarde advised that the agenda for the next Meeting would include discussion of 1) Wastewater Disposal Technical issues, and 2) District Cost Allocations.

At 9:00 PM a motion to adjourn was made, seconded and voted unanimously in the affirmative.