

Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project

Update #9

To: Waitsfield Selectboard
From: Joshua Schwartz, MRV Planning District
CC: Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project Team Members
Annie Decker-Dell'Isola, Waitsfield Town Admin.
JB Weir, Waitsfield Planning & Zoning Admin.
Randy Brittingham, Waitsfield Town Treasurer/Grant Admin.
Bob Cook, Waitsfield Planning Commissioner
Chach Curtis, Waitsfield Selectboard Member
Robin Morris, Waitsfield Water Commissioner
Jon Ashley, DuBois & King
Date: February 29, 2024
Re: Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project Update #9

This serves as the ninth update on the Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project, a task I'm carrying out in my role as Planning Coordination Team Lead (as articulated in the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Town of Waitsfield and the Mad River Valley Planning District for the Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project*, 3.30.23). The purpose of these updates is to ensure the Waitsfield Selectboard and Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project Team Members are abreast of project status and developments, summarizing activities over the preceding weeks. Other updates in this series consist of Update #1 (4.14.23), Update #2 (5.5.23), Update #3 (5.26.23), Update #4 (7.5.23), Update #5 (8.11.23), Update #6 (9.8.23), Update #7 (12.18.23), & Update #8 (1.19.24).

Recent Activities

Project Coordination Team (PCT)

- Meetings: 1.22, 1.29, 2.5, 2.12, 2.20, & 2.26
- Activities
 - Meeting weekly to coordinate various project tasks and team activities.
 - In light of the project MOU between Waitsfield and MRVPD outlining Project Management duties ending on 3.5.24, the PCT has been focusing on the subsequent transition of responsibilities. While Joshua Schwartz will no longer be serving as PCT Lead after this date, MRVPD staff is dedicated to supporting the project through the next year. In the spring (March – June), that role will include supporting outreach and engagement efforts led by the Municipal Project Manager and the broader Waitsfield Planning Project Team. A check-in between the parties in late June will fine-tune subsequent needs and supports, for which MRVPD is committed to.
 - The PCT has developed a recommendation for hiring a Municipal Project Manager through the spring and into the summer, included as part of the 3.4 Selectboard packet.

Engineering/Technical Team (ETT)

- Meetings: 1.24, 1.31, 2.7, 2.14, 2.21, & 2.28
- Activities
 - ETT members have been undertaking property owner engagement activities over the past month and a half. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. As of 2.29, the project team has secured verbal sign-up interest from 95% of contacted parcel owners, representing 38,857 gpd, or 44%, of the project's estimated capacity. Similar conversations are underway for locations of critical easements.
 - On 1.4 Jonathan Harries, USDA RD State Engineer, provided comments on the Final Draft PER that had been sent to him on 12.6. A follow-up meeting with Jon Harries and ETT members took place on 2.7, and

after subsequent dialogue as an ETT, a draft response addressing USDA RD's comments was emailed to Jonathon Harries on 2.29.

- The project's Environmental Information Document (EID) was submitted to DEC on 1.23.
- 30% Final Design is underway. Recent ETT meetings have focused on advanced treatment technology selection process, operations considerations, tank and pump station locations, VDHP archeology requirements, and more.

Funding Team (FT)

- Meetings: 1.20 & 2.12
- Activities
 - As a result of funding eligibility for State ARPA Wastewater and USDA RD programs, the project team recommended a bond vote date of 6.11. On 1.22 the Selectboard selected this date.
 - VT Pollution Control Grant
 - Waitsfield's project is anticipated to have a favorable listing for VT Pollution Control Grant funding in the soon to be released SFY25 Intended Use Plan. Recent dialogue with DEC staff has highlighted the need to further understand potential timing for such funding.
 - State Village Wastewater ARPA Grant
 - Waitsfield's project is anticipated to have a favorable listing for State Village Wastewater ARPA funding in the soon to be released SFY25 Intended Use Plan. Recent dialogue with DEC staff has identified that the town may be eligible for more funding from this source than previously anticipated.
 - Neighborhood Development Area
 - MRVPD staff have coordinated with the Waitsfield ZA in developing a draft application for Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) Designation for Irasville, which includes extensive mapping. The draft was sent to DHCD staff for review on 2.23. Baring this feedback, the intent is to submit the NDA application in March. Amongst other benefits, an NDA designation would make Irasville eligible for CWSRF subsidy to undertake Step 2 60% Design (anticipated to commence in July 2024) as well as other funding opportunities for the construction phase.
 - USDA Rural Development
 - Project members have continued communication with Misty Sinsigalli, NH/VT Area Director.
 - An application for USDA RD funding is currently being drafted, to be submitted in advance of their 4.12 deadline.
 - Congressional Discretionary Spending
 - JB Weir has been in touch with congressional representative staff regarding CDS timelines. Applications are anticipated to be released in late March to early April.
 - Anticipating the draft version of the State's SFY25 Intended Use Plan in later March, which will provide info regarding rankings for related grant eligibility.

Public Outreach Team (POT)

- Meetings: 1.29, 2.6, 2.16, & 2.20
- Activity
 - A full project engagement strategy has been developed, which includes communication elements and an implementation timeline.
 - On 2.22 the town was notified that its application to the Small Grants for Smart Growth competitive grant round had received full funding. The program is being run by the Vermont Natural Resources Council and the Preservation Trust of Vermont to fund local initiatives for flood-resilient community development. The \$5k in funding will support the town's efforts to effectively communicate the tenets of the Waitsfield Community Wastewater Project and educate the public about the importance of municipal wastewater and how it can positively influence the public & environmental health of the community.
 - Public engagement efforts kicked off on 2.16 with the publishing of a new webpage serving as the one-stop for all info related to the Waitsfield Community Wastewater Project (WCWP).
 - <https://www.waitsfieldvt.us/waitsfield-community-wastewater-project/>
 - Consists of three sections

- Information/Summary
 - Landing page providing overview, the Why, What, & How.
- Frequently Asked Questions
 - Numerous questions related to project specifics and funding answered with detail. Additional questions to be added as they come up.
- Resources
 - All project documents, summaries, planning project updates, reports, presentations, and associated webpages.
 - Underlying challenges with the town’s website have hampered the full functionality of the WCWP webpage. The town’s new website is planned to go live in mid-March, which will include full functionality of the WCWP portions.
- A project overview document has been completed; a copy is attached. It is also available on the WCWP webpage.
 - Direct link: https://waitsfieldvt.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Copy-of-One_Pager_V7.png
- On 2.23 MRVPD staff had a meeting with a prospective videographer for the purpose of developing an education project video.
- MRVPD staff have developed a draft WCWP Story Map to be added to the WCWP webpage. A Story Map is a web-based application that will allow sharing project maps in the context of narrative text.
- MRVPD staff are creating a draft mailer highlighting project elements and announcing the 1st public meeting.
- OT members are currently working to schedule the first project public meeting, which is intended to include project partners and funders.
- Property owner engagement activities have been in action by ETT members since mid-January. Approximately 30% of property owners within the proposed service area have been contacted to date. The response has been overwhelmingly positive.

Near-Term Activities

- Continue Property Owner Outreach
- Revamped Town Website w/ WCWP content live
- Select 1st Public Meeting Date
- Story Map live
- USDA RD Application
- CDS Applications

HEALTHY WAITSFIELD

Waitsfield Community Wastewater Project



Project Goals

- **Protect water quality** in the Mad River
- **Safeguard human health** near drinking water wells
- **Replace aging septic systems** with no upfront cost
- **Build more housing** in Waitsfield Village & Irasville
- **Have no impact on Waitsfield municipal tax rates**



System Components

- **Wastewater collection** from homes and businesses in Waitsfield Village & Irasville
- **Conveyance** from Waitsfield Village & Irasville along VT 100 to the Munn Site
- **Treatment & disposal** at the Munn Site, across from Valley Animal Hospital

Timeline

- 2022 Planning
- 2023 Preliminary design
- 2024-25 Final design
- 2025 Permitting
- 2025 Construction starts
- 2026 System online

All work to date has been funded through state and federal sources (~\$400,000) **at no cost to taxpayers**. Initial property owner conversations are underway and have been overwhelmingly positive and supportive.

Anticipated Costs, No Tax Impact

Estimated construction costs are ~\$15 million. The Town is seeking ~\$13 million in grants and ~\$2 million in loans to pay for the system. **The project will not impact Waitsfield municipal tax rates**. Loan payments and operating costs will be covered by reasonable user fees, just like the existing town water system.



Bond Vote!

A successful bond vote on June 11, 2024 is crucial to secure maximum grant funding. Grant rules require the town vote to bond the full ~\$15M cost, even though we are seeking ~\$13M in grants. Your vote allows the town to pursue funding; construction will only proceed if grants & loans ensure affordability for users.



<https://www.waitsfieldvt.us/waitsfield-community-wastewater-project>

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