

Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project

Update #7

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: December 15, 2023
Re: Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project Update #7

This serves as the seventh 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*). 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: 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).

Recent Activities

Project Coordination Team (PCT)

- Meetings: 9.11, 9.18, 9.25, 10.10, 10.24, 11.6, 11.13, 11.28, 12.4, & 12.11
- Activities
 - Meeting weekly to coordinate various project tasks and team activities.
 - The [FFY23/SFY24 CWSRF Intended Use Plan \(IUP\)](#) was finalized on 9.20.
 - Waitsfield scored 66 points on the Project Priority List (PList)
 - 10th place tie for the *SFY2024 Pollution Control Priority & Planning List*, outside of the fundable range.
 - 6th place ranking on the *SFY24 ARPA Waiting Town List*.
 - On 8.7 Waitsfield submitted public comment to the Draft IUP, which is directly addressed in section 14, Responsiveness Summary, of the final IUP.
 - On 11.21 submitted an application on behalf of the Waitsfield WW Infrastructure Project for the Central Vermont 2024 Regional Project Priority List. A committee made up of board members from the Central VT Regional Planning Commission and Central VT Economic Development Corporation will rank and score the projects based on Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) criteria, with the top ten ranked projects for ACCD to keep in mind as funding decisions are made throughout 2024.
 - Project Priority List (PList) applications for the SFY25 Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) were released on 11.17. The PList is an integral part of the annual CWSRF Intended Use Plan (IUP), listing projects that have requested funding that year and are ranked according to the program's

priority system. To obtain CWSRF funding for all construction work (Step 3) and certain final design activities (Step 2), a project must be included on the PList. The PList is replaced annually. The PCT met with DEC staff on 9.28 to receive input and insight on PList elements. Joshua developed a draft application on 12.7 and sent it along to project engineer Jon Ashley for additional input. The draft application seeks to increase the town's ranking over the current year's PList, increasing eligibility for a variety of funding avenues. A final version will be submitted by the due date (1.16).

- At a 11.29 meeting with DEC staff, received news that Waitsfield's weighted average Median Household Income (MHI) calculation was accepted, resulting in the Town of Waitsfield being eligible for CWSRF subsidy for Step 2 funding. This answers a question originally submitted to DEC by Alice Peal, Waitsfield PC Chair, on 2.2 and rephrased in the *7.27 Waitsfield Water and Wastewater Project Funding Eligibility by Median Income | Follow-up* document, submitted by Christine Sullivan, SB Chair.
- On 10.19 a revised Engineering Services Agreement to undertake 30% of the design phase (Step 2) was submitted to DEC, totaling \$182,348. Based on DEC's recent MHI determination, the anticipated CWSRF subsidy for this work is \$153,674 (100% subsidy to \$125k, 50% subsidy above). The Town of Waitsfield anticipates Step 2 loan paperwork from DEC by the end of December 2023 to undertake 30% of the design phase, stipulating that 84% of its total cost will be subsidized through CWSRF. In sum, the Town of Waitsfield will have received \$353,092 in CWSRF subsidies to date to bring the Waitsfield Community Wastewater Project through 30% Final Design (Step 1: \$199,418 + Step 2 30%: \$153,674).
- PCT members have developed an updated project timeline that carries the project through Phase 2: Final Design and into Phase 3: Construction.

Engineering/Technical Team (ETT)

- Meetings: 9.20, 10.10, 10.11, 10.25, 11.2, 11.29, 12.4, & 12.13
- Activities
 - After extensive dialogue with DEC Water Investment Division Engineering Section staff, and resultant revisions to the "90% Draft," a "Final Draft" Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) was submitted to DEC on 12.4. A PER Acceptance Letter from DEC is expected momentarily.
 - The Final Draft PER was sent to Jon Harries, USDA RD State Engineer, on 12.6 for feedback and comments.
 - Joshua is developing a Waitsfield Wastewater Project PER summary document that provides context and highlights its findings.
 - The town received confirmation from VT Department of Historic Preservation's (VDHP) that their review of archeological and historic significance of the Munn Site found no concerns. Additional review will be required of the project's conveyance system, to take place as part of Step 2: Final Design.
 - The project's Environmental Information Document (EID) is being finalized, anticipated to be submitted by 12.22. DEC acceptance of the PER and EID marks the completion of the Waitsfield Wastewater Project's Step 1: Planning stage.
 - On 9.20 the ETT met with John Kiernan of RCAP Solutions to explore opportunities for an income survey. DEC's acceptance of Waitsfield's weighted average MHI calculation has removed the need to undertake an income survey.
 - A representative of VT Rural Wastewater Association reached out to offer technical assistance to the town.
 - ETT members have developed a strategy for utilizing its Salesforce subscription to assist tracking wastewater project info for properties within the wastewater service area.

Funding Team (FT)

- Meetings: 9.28, 10.5, 12.11, & 12.15
- Activities
 - On 10.5 FT reviewed the *Town of Waitsfield Wastewater Project 2024 Funding Landscape* document with Bonnie Waninger, who serves as a Federal Funding Assistance Coordinator with the VT League of Cities & Towns. Bonnie provided feedback, insight, strategies, and additional options for project funding avenues.
 - Step 2 Funding: CWSRF - Final Design
 - Waitsfield submitted a revised Engineering Services Agreement ESA to undertake 30% of the design phase (Step 2) on 10.19, which replaced the original ESA submitted on 6.29. The revised ESA focuses the 30% work within Waitsfield's Designated Village and its .25 mile buffer, which is eligible for CWSRF subsidy. The result of this change, and DEC's recent MHI determination, is \$153,674 in anticipated subsidy.
 - VT Pollution Control Grant
 - On 9.28 FT members met with DEC staff to receive insight as to how it can bolster its 90% Draft PER and future Project Priority List application for the purpose of increasing eligibility for future Pollution Control Grants.
 - Neighborhood Development Area
 - Coordinating with the Planning Commission on its intent to submit an application for Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) Designation for Irasville. 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).
 - USDA RD
 - The PCT met with Misty Sinsigalli, Acting Community Program Director NH/VT, and Jonathan Harries, VT/NH State Engineer, of USDA RD on 10.12 to discuss funding options. Takeaways: Waitsfield's MHI appears to meet their program's 75% grant threshold. To be eligible, need to certify the town's MHI, meet federal wetlands criteria, landowner connection agreements, and a successful bond vote for the full cost prior to funding submission.
 - The Final Draft PER was sent to Jon Harries, USDA RD State Engineer, on 12.6 for feedback and comments.
 - Scheduling a meeting for late December to further explore timeline and funding eligibility.

Public Outreach Team (POT)

- Meetings: 12.11, 12.15
- Activity
 - <https://www.waitsfieldvt.us/waitsfield-wastewater-planning-project/>
 - Developing a strategy to gauge project interest and collect relevant data from property owners within the proposed Wastewater Service Area. To interrelate with broader community outreach and communication.
 - Page to be updated and overhauled in January.
 - On 9.25 Joshua met with Melissa Manka, Town Planner with the Town of Westford. Melissa served as lead for Westford's wastewater infrastructure project, providing an understanding of the town's approach, outreach, etc. On 11.7 Westford's wastewater system bond vote failed by 44 votes.

Near-Term Activities

- PER Acceptance from DEC
- EID Submittal to DEC
- Finalizing Step 2 30% Design ESA
- Outreach Strategy
- Waitsfield Wastewater Planning Project Webpage Overhaul