

**Town of Westport
Infrastructure Oversight Committee
Meeting Minutes – February 21, 2024
6:30 pm**

The meeting of the Infrastructure Oversight Committee (IOC) was called to order at 6:30 pm in the Select Board room at Town Hall. Attending were Steve Ouellette (Chair), Bob Daylor (Vice Chair), Maury May (Clerk), Jerry Coutinho (At Large), Manny Soares (At Large), and new Finance Committee member Christopher Thrasher. Joe Rioux (At Large) and Joe Amaral (B2B) were absent without explanation. Also attending were Jim Hartnett (ex-officio Town Administrator) and Roger Fernandes (Consultant). A quorum was achieved with six sworn-in members. In addition, the meeting was well attended by members of the public, including Rob Machado, David Cole, Lori Camara, Michael Sullivan, Butch Souza and John Bullard.

Organizational business:

- **Membership – update.** We welcome Christopher Thrasher as our new Finance Committee rep, who replaces Lawrence Holsworth who resigned.
- **Minutes – approval.** The minutes of our last regular meeting on January 24, 2024 were moved by Maury May, seconded by Manny Soares and approved 5-0-1, with all in favor and Christopher Thrasher abstaining (not a member in January).
- **Next meeting – scheduled.** We schedule our next meeting for March 13, 2024. Location to be determined.

Betterment Policy – recommendation. Roger Fernandes gave a PowerPoint presentation to help the Committee prepare a recommendation to the Select Board.

- **Slides 1-3 – introduction.**
- **Slide 4 – terminology.** Difference between “allocation” (split between users and Town wide) and “betterment” (charges paid by users).
- **Slide 5 – understanding betterments.** Main sewer line and pump stations are the underpinning for pipes serving individual properties.
- **Slide 6 – betterment method.** The Uniform Unit Method is the common and recommended method to determine betterments.
- **Slide 7 – explanation of method.** Each house is given one Equivalent Dwelling Unit (EDU) and commercial properties are given multiple EDUs depending on the size of the property and existing or potential development. We estimate one EDU at about \$10,000.
- **Slide 8 – more explanation.** Both developed and undeveloped residential properties are subject to betterment.
- **Slide 9 – more explanation.** The EDUs for non-residential properties are based upon a formula involving lot size and a floor area ratio (FAR) that produce an estimated flow.
- **Slide 10 – allocation of betterments.** We envision the \$35 million trunkline project would be paid for with a 77%/23% split between Town-wide levy and user betterments fees.
- **Slide 11 – approximate use contribution.** A graph demonstrates the following breakdown of betterments: 17.9% developed residential, 8.2% undeveloped residential, 64.6% developed non-residential, and 6.3% undeveloped non-residential.

Public Comments.

- **Rob Machado.** Are Betterments based on square footage of lot? Mr. Fernandes says they are determined by usage. Can Betterment be waived if owner donates land for

pump station? Mr. Fernandes says the law is not written that way. Mr. Daylor notes that land owners will receive just compensation for the easement.

- **Lori Camara.** She is concerned about using her land at 831 State Road for a pump station, saying she needs parking spaces. Mr. Daylor says they are placed underground. Mr. Coutinho says he doesn't think we can buy property but Mr. Hartnett says we can take an easement.

Mr. Fernandes returns to his presentation with the upcoming schedule:

Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish
Route 6 SEWER	72 days?	Mon 02/19/24	Tue 05/28/24
MassDOT Highway Access Permit All Contracts	19 days	Mon 02/19/24	Thu 03/14/24
Finalize Design (100%) Contract All Contracts	21 days	Mon 02/19/24	Mon 03/18/24
Survey & Legal Descriptions Pump 4 Stations All Contracts	28 days?	Mon 02/19/24	Wed 03/27/24
Westport Con Com NOI Order Of Conditions Issued	32 days	Mon 02/19/24	Tue 04/02/24
Townwide Ballot Vote	37 days	Mon 02/19/24	Tue 04/09/24
Bid Opening All Contracts	52 days	Mon 02/19/24	Tue 04/30/24
Annual Town Meeting	57 days	Mon 02/19/24	Tue 05/07/24
Interbasin Transfer RDI WRC Meeting	59 days	Mon 02/19/24	Thu 05/09/24
Land Easement Eminent Domain MGL, Ch40, Sec 14, & Ch79	62 days	Mon 02/19/24	Tue 05/14/24
BOS Sign Contract w/Contractor	72 days	Mon 02/19/24	Tue 05/28/24

Public Comments – continued.

- **David Cole.** Who recommends the Uniform Unit Method of Betterments? Mr. Fernandes says Kleinfelder. Mr. Cole replies it is like a poll tax and not progressive because it does not take into account household wealth. Mr. May says our proposed 20% Betterment allocation recognizes lower household wealth in the North End. Mr. Soares notes that the Betterment for water-only is 0% that helps those in the North End. Mr. Daylor says that flat-rate Betterments are fair regardless of lot size because each household gets sewer.
- **John Bullard.** He thinks the IOC has done a lot to make the financing of the project progressive. He notes 30% Betterments in other communities with a \$20,000 fee.
- **Michael Sullivan/WRWA.** To what degree have we tried to get grants? Mr. May notes we have failed to get two MassWorks grants but it looks like Rep. Keating's federal earmark of \$960,000 is still alive. He also notes State Rep. Rodrigues' \$1 million ARPA earmark, plus another \$1 million from Bristol Country ARPA money. Mr. Soares also notes the possible PFAS grant of \$3.7 million.
- **Rob Machado.** He asks why we were denied two MassWorks grants? Mr. Daylor responds because we had no development project ready to go.

Outreach – for Ballot Box in April and Town Meeting in May.

Mr. May says we need public outreach in anticipation of upcoming votes. We need more public meetings in the project area, following on our January 24, 2024 informational IOC meeting in the High School auditorium. Sen. Rodrigues recommends we hire a campaign manager but Mr. Hartnett says it is against campaign financing laws to use Town money for a ballot question. Mr. May asks Mr. Soares how are his yard signs going and the latter says they are coming with the message "Vote for Clean Water". Discussion ensued.

- **Rob Machado.** The project needs to be sold as a service.
- **Bob Daylor.** We have a big sell in a short time.
- **Butch Souza.** We need to sell the project to blue-collar guys and need to break down the numbers so people can understand them. Older people in Town cannot afford this.
- **Manny Soares.** A new septic system in the neighborhood recently cost \$42,000.
- **Jerry Coutinho.** Septics are not going to get any cheaper.
- **Steve Ouellette.** Sewer will be run by a Sewer Enterprise Fund, just like the Waterline Enterprise Fund runs the existing water service.
- **Christopher Thrasher.** This is the single most important project for economic and environmental improvement. He asks if Town funds can be used for education? [Answer unclear.]
- **Michael Sullivan.** The Westport River Watershed Alliance and the Buzzards Bay Coalition will spend funds on outreach.
- **Korrin Petersen/BBC.** Sewer is the best way to remove pollution from the Westport River and the Buzzards Bay Coalition will support this effort.

Motions. The IOC recommends the following motions to the Select Board as Town Meeting warrant articles.

- **Betterment allocation.** Mr. Daylor makes a motion to recommend to the Select Board that the sewer Betterment allocation be set at 20% for those who receive the service and 80% to the whole Town. The motion is seconded by Mr. May and passes 6-0.
- **Sewer Enterprise Fund.** Mr. May makes a motion to recommend to the Select Board that a Sewer Enterprise Fund be established to run the money side of the sewer utility. The motion is seconded by Mr. Daylor and passes 6-0.
- **Sewer Commissioners.** Mr. May makes a motion to recommend to the Select Board that a Sewer Commission be established to run the sewer utility. The motion is seconded by Mr. Daylor. Discussion ensued. Mr. Soares favors Infrastructure Commissioners to oversee water & sewer and the engineer that is budgeted. Mr. Coutinho says this motion is just a placeholder and is not forever. Mr. Hartnett thinks it is cleaner to have the Select Board appoint themselves as Commissioners first, and then transfer to an appointed Commission later on. Mr. Thrasher suggested an amended motion to term-limit Commissioners. Mr. Daylor says the motion as written does what we want it to do. Mr. May agrees. Motion passes 6-0.
- **Senior Deferrals.** Mr. Soares makes a motion to recommend to the Select Board to allow for senior deferrals for property tax adjustments and betterments. The motion is seconded by Mr. Thrasher. Mr. Hartnett says the monies deferred are charged 5% interest. Motion passes 6-0.
- **Forcing Connection.** Mr. Hartnett says that with a Comprehensive Water Resource Management Plan (or Targeted-Integrated WRMP) we could force sewer connections. Discussion ensued. Mr. Machado suggests a five-year tie-in rule. There was no support for recommending anything now.

Outreach – final comments. Ms. Petersen asks about further IOC outreach. Plans for another IOC meeting in the North End was discussed, perhaps the Macomber School on March 13th.

Adjournment. Mr. Daylor moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Coutinho seconded the motion. It passed unanimously 6-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.