

FRANKLIN WATERSHED COMMITTEE
Minutes for Public Planning Session on Septic issues
January 10, 2009
Felco Room, Franklin Homestead

Officers Present: President - Jim Cameron
Treasurer - Sue Clark

Others Present: Dick Benton, David Breed, Sam Ruggiano- Ruggiano Engineering, Paul Stanley, Mary Clark- Premier Tech, Tim Lake- Advantech Distributor, Nancy Fiske, Wayne Fiske, Jim Dewing, Peter Mazurak-Cross Engineering, Tom Joslin- DEC, Kim Gates, Dan Larivee, Rolland Rainville, Lucille Rainville, and Heidi Britch-Valenta.

Meeting started at 10:15 A.M.

Jim Cameron started the meeting by having everyone introduce themselves and state their interest in the watershed. Cameron gave a brief history of the group and provided an overview of the groups goals.

Cameron said that the group has held planning sessions in the past and this is a continuation of that work. At a previous meeting it was consensus that although septic is generally estimated to contribute minimally to the phosphorus issue, it is strongly believed that there are substandard septic systems on the Carmi lakeshore that are contributing to the contamination of the lake.

The goal of this meeting is to understand possible solutions to improve lakeshore septic systems and to determine a path for further work.

The first speaker was Sam Ruggiano of Ruggiano Engineering. He was part of the team that developed the septic system for the Homestead and he is familiar with the area. He provided soil maps of the Lake Carmi region. He suggested that a community septic system would be possible for various lakeshore clusters depending on soils. This plan has a 22 household threshold before an indirect discharge permit would be required. This permit would require extensive soil testing and continuous monitoring.

Ruggiano suggested that suitable land for this purpose be delineated and reserved for this purpose to prevent further development that would preclude this option. Seasonal camps must be considered residences for planning purposes to allow conversion at a later date.

Cameron said the committee has been funding a pump out program for septic systems along the lake. He also asked about the regulations regarding holding tanks for septic systems. Peter Mazurak said it is no longer possible to install holding tanks unless you can prove to the state that it is your only option. You must first try to get a system or an easement to suitable land for a system.

Mary Clark, Premier Tech Environment, a representative of advanced treatment systems spoke next and suggested addressing the immediate issue by focusing on hotspots. The worst areas around the lake perhaps areas that are below the water table and remain constantly wet should be rectified with a community system that could serve as a model.

She gave a quick description of how septic systems work then added that when most were installed it was thought that having them in the water table was beneficial. Now it is understood that allows contaminants to enter the lake. She described the benefits of having an advanced treatment system which processes the effluent prior to it reaching the leach field. The water reaching the field is very clean.

Tim Lake interjected to point out that the introduction of the advanced pretreatment system can meet state approval for conversion from a two bedroom home to a three bedroom. Lake, a distributor for the advanced treatment systems said he has been working with the Georgia Shore Association. They have been able to assist homeowners in their upgrades by combining homes to reduce the cost of the system. The piece of equipment to pretreat will cost \$7,000. To pretreat two homes is \$8,500 so the individual cost is reduced.

Another alternative to a mound system is a crib that reduces the amount of space required. Lake described the process they are following in Georgia Shore to send out a letter to set a date, do testing, and select a site. They then provide the designer, and handle the installation. He said that state assistance is possible based on income. This cost includes a monitoring contract \$14,000.00 designed, installed and a maintenance contract for 8yrs. Monitoring is a continual requirement. He explained that the system he distributes is superior in that it uses gravity to feed the pretreat and electricity is not continuously required as it is with many other models, thereby reducing the cost to the land owners by \$500 to \$1,000 per year.

Nancy Fiske questioned if the long term maintenance requirement of the systems are manageable for owners. She also asked what happens when a land owner does not have the money to continue the upkeep of the system. This question was not clearly answered.

Paul Stanley questioned the process to determine which systems are in need of improvement. Sue Clark said the records would show any new system within the last 5 years.

Peter Mazurak, Cross Consulting Engineers, started by saying that education was key at this point in the process. Getting accurate information out to residents will be essential to changing opinions. Community systems may be advantageous for parties that cannot do something on their property due to lack of space, money, or suitable soil. Cameron stated his understanding that the water table is very high and many systems are in the water.

Mazurak continued to say that another advantage of a community system would be to eliminate the septic from the well water area. There is not sufficient room to have an isolation area around the wells and have the septic in the same area.

Britch-Valenta asked about the ramifications of septic survey information for land owners. Are we mandated to report information to the state, and if so what does that mean? Mazurak suggested that surveys could be anonymous. Mary Clark said that they have maintained confidential reports between the designer and the homeowner.

Mary Clark supported the earlier comment that negotiations with land owners now to secure easements for suitable soils may be prudent.

Ruggiano added that he believes a municipal system would run in the area of 4.5 million and that a more practical concept may be the community septic in various location surrounding the lake. He suggested beginning the process with test pits around the lake to gain that first level of knowledge.

Jim Dewing, lakeshore property owner said the average size of his lakeshore properties are '60 x 60'. He doesn't believe that people will be interested in spending money for septic systems when they aren't required to.

Tom Joslin, DEC Municipal Facilities Division, described his involvement in assisting the towns of Cabot and Warren through the process of creating municipal sewage treatment systems. Cabot was required to act on their sewer system. Warren was being pro-active. He explained the 4 community systems that served the Cabot area along with a few smaller units. The user fees for the community system in Warren was high at \$600 per year.

Joslin said there is money available for towns to convert to community septic but it would be greater for those towns that can confirm contamination. Funding is not income sensitive. Planning grants are readily available but may need to be repaid if the project does not come to fruition. Low/no interest loans from the government are available which towns then loan out to land owners that wish to do an upgrade. Someone from the town would need to be involved in the process. Mary Clark pointed out that even if the system does not serve the whole town you have to sell the idea to the whole town to support it and approve funding.

Joslin thought that having soil testing done may make the project more likely to receive funding.

Lucille Rainville asked if the responsibility to improve the septic belongs to the camp owner or the land owner on the leased portion of the shore. It was consensus that the lease typically gives this authority to the lease/ camp owner.

The State Parks system was discussed. Dye testing was discussed. It was suggested that there may still be some systems on the lake that are just a straight pipe into the lake.

A Brainstorming session revealed the following ideas for actions:

- Develop a plan to educate all campers in their role to reduce phosphorus
- Host two educational meetings this summer targeting campers- June and Aug.
- Create a booklet on suggesting for reducing phosphorous
- Have a special edition of the newsletter focusing on the topic
- Send a letter to all camp owners
- Bring a model Advanced Treatment unit into town on a trailer for a demo day
- Do an assessment of land around the lake – soil analysis
- Share information freely to avoid rumor mill inaccuracies
- Use all outlets for publicity: website, newspapers, newsletters, etc.
- Collaborate with other groups to access their contacts
- Soil testing
- Research town records for information on newer septic
- Septic assessments
- Use FWC funds to help people that are not interested or able to upgrade
- Fund a demonstration model in know hot spots along the lake
- Solicit volunteers to map out soils work with GIS, GPS
- Involve Town Health Officer

The following options were identified:

multiple community systems
on site pre treatment systems
above ground sand systems with pre-treatment
one large municipal based system

Cameron then asked for volunteers to chair the following action item collaboratively with Britch-Valenta.

1. Fact Sheet: David Breed & Dick Benton & Heidi
Effects of water pollution – phosphorus etc. .
Water quality
TMDL Information
Condition of Lake (2ND most impaired lake in Vermont.)
2. Plan to educate Sue Clark & Heidi
3. Development assessment. – Digging etc. Jim Cameron & Heidi

Respectfully submitted,

Dick Benton and Heidi Britch-Valenta

