

Lost Lake Sewer Committee Minutes
August 22, 2013

Present: Dr. Horowitz, Board of Health; Thomas D. Orcutt, Water/Sewer Superintendent; John G. Petropoulos, Selectman; Jay Prager, Finance Committee, Michael Rosa, At Large

Meeting was called to order at 7:00

Mr. Petropoulos modified the order of the agenda in order to welcome new Member Michael Rosa to the Committee. Mr. Rosa introduced himself and provided some background including the fact that he is currently a Selectman in Billerica MA. His family has owned property on the Lake for close to 100 years. He is the founding member of the Groton Lakes Association.

The Committee had waited to reorganize until all members could be present. Mr. Prager nominated Mr. Petropoulos to be Chair. Mr. Rosa seconded the motion. Vote was 5 to 0 in favor. Mr. Prager nominated Mr. Orcutt to be Vice Chair. Mr. Rosa seconded the motion. Vote was 5 to 0 in favor. It was decided not to elect a clerk. Mr. Petropoulos volunteered to take meeting minutes.

Dr. Horwitz had asked that the minutes from 6/13/13, 6/27/13 and 7/18/13 be placed on the agenda to be reconsidered, having been approved on 8/7/13. The Committee agreed to consider reopening the minutes. Dr. Horwitz wanted the record to reflect that the minutes of 6/13/13 and 6/27/13 were accepted as written by Clerk Angela Garger and edited by Chairman Petropoulos. There was no need to review minutes from 7/18/13. Mr. Orcutt will send out the minutes from 6/13/13 for committee members to review.

Minutes from 8/7/13 were reviewed. Dr. Horwitz motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Orcutt seconded the motion. Minutes were approved with Mr. Orcutt, Dr. Horwitz and Mr. Petropoulos in favor. Mr. Prager and Mr. Rosa abstained as they were not present for the 8/7/13 meeting.

It was discovered that an unapproved version of the 6/13/13 minutes had been posted to the Town LLSC page. Mr. Orcutt was to remove that version and replace with the approved version.

Initial testing results from CEI were reviewed. These included 7 samples from local private wells and a sample from the Whitney Well. One of the 7 samples was a duplicate of one of the other samples in order to provide validation of the testing procedure. So in practical terms, 6 private wells were tested. Owners of all well locations other than Whitney Wells were assured that well locations will remain anonymous and no compulsory action will result from test outcomes. "Natural background levels" of Nitrates caused by such things as fertilizers, animal waste and

decaying plants are expected to be between 1 and 2 PPM. Results showed levels of nitrates below state minimums. of 10 PPM in all wells. 2 wells had non-detectable levels. 2 had levels between 1.5 and 2.5 PPM. The Town well was not measured for Nitrates as these tests are done regularly and Nitrate levels are consistently very low. 2 wells showed levels of between 5 and 6 PPM. Dr. Horwitz indicated that levels above 5 may typically cause the BOH to require action if they are discovered through 'non-anonymous' testing. She will confirm this requirement.

64 types of Emerging Contaminants were tested for in 2 of the private wells and in the Whitney Well. "Emerging Contaminants" (ECs) are typically traces of medications or other ingested product and are used as indicators of contamination that generally only comes from septic systems either through direct disposal of medications or through human waste containing traces of contamination. Traces of 2 ECs were found in 1 of the 2 private wells and in the Whitney Well. CEI noted that they found it unusual that there would be ECs in the Whitney well but that Nitrate levels would be negligible, as the two generally go together.

Much discussion involved how to interpret the presence of the Nitrate and EC results. Mr. Orcutt and Dr. Horwitz were concerned that EC results provided a strong indicator that septic contamination was reaching the Whitney well and demonstration of the fact that septic systems. are polluting groundwater. Mr. Prager pointed out that the ECs are measured in Parts Per Trillion (PPT) which is infinitesimally smaller than the Parts Per Million (PPM) in which Nitrates are measured. He noted that this would mean that the mere presence of ECs may be misleading. Mr. Prager also noted that one of the two wells with the Nitrates >5PPM (5.38) was only 30 feet deep and that the pollution could be the result of a neighbor applying fertilizer as much as it could be from a leaky septic system. Mr. Orcutt noted that the other well with Nitrates >5PPM (5.69) was 120 ft deep and that this implied a leaky seal around the well. Mr. Rosa pointed out that the exact 2 ECs were found in 2 different wells, and that as these wells were a considerable distance from each other, and as a total of 64 ECs were tested for, there is an implication that the two wells had something in common, though we were all hard pressed to determine what that could be.

All parties agreed that the ECs in the Whitney Well came from people but we could not all agree that they came from local septic system.

Erich Garger asked if Nitrate levels vary in water testing of the same location over time. Mr. Orcutt confirmed that they do indeed vary over time. The Whitney well has tested in a range over the last 20 years with occasional spikes but never over 2 PPM and usually far below that level. Mr. Garger also asked if the weed die off from the recent application of herbicide could affect nitrate levels. Mr. Orcutt answered that we had been advised by CEI that it would not affect Nitrate levels. Other members of the group pointed out that Woodard and Curran had indicated to the contrary. It is worth noting that CEI pointed out that background levels of Nitrates are caused by, among other things, decaying plant material. It was agreed that we have received a range of

opinion on this matter and that we needed to get a final answer that we could feel comfortable with.

Mr. Petropoulos noted that, if ECs are present in the Whitney well and if nitrates are generally found together with ECs and if nitrate levels have been consistently at or below expected background levels..... might we have always had ECs in the Whitney well and just not known it because we did not test for it. If that is true and we have always been comfortable with the levels of Nitrates, then the awareness of ECs would be nothing more than a new fact but should not cause concern for a new or pending threat. It was agreed that we do not and cannot know the history of ECs over time so the above is simply conjecture. Mr. Orcutt expressed his concern about finding that ECs had been found in the Whitney well and indicated that he would be testing for ECs in all public water supplies.

The Committee agreed to post the CEI data to the LLSC page on the Town Website.

The Committee discussed how to review this and future data with CEI. All agreed that we did not want CEI to come in on just the well testing when there is lots of remaining data to come in including Lake and PoreWater samples as well as samples from Martins Pond Brook. We would like to have them come after some additional data arrives. Mr. Orcutt was to get CEI to provide milestones and dates so that we could understand when data would be available and schedule time with them. The Committee also discussed how it would like to prepare for a CEI meeting. Mr. Petropoulos and Mr. Prager wanted to have an opportunity to meet as a group to review all data before meeting with CEI. They felt that this would leave them better prepared to meet with CEI. Some members were comfortable with receiving the data from CEI a few days prior to a meeting and then meeting with CEI to ask questions and review data. They felt that meeting ahead of a CEI meeting would cause unnecessary delays. It was agreed that we would schedule meetings on 9/5/13 and 9/12/13 and hope that data came in prior to 9/5/13 so that it could be discussed as a group with an invite to CEI to come in on 9/12/13 to review the data.

Mr. Orcutt wanted to assure that there was a placeholder on the fall Town Meeting agenda in case the Committee got to a point where it felt it could make a recommendation to move forward with a sewer system. Other members of the Committee suggested that it was impractical to think that we could be ready for such a proposal by the Fall Town Meeting. All parties agreed that we should provide a presentation to Town Meeting on the status of the work that we have done and that any proposal for a Sewer should be handled by a Special Town Meeting. Mr. Petropoulos will provide a draft for review by the Committee.

The Committee discussed assuring that the Town remains eligible for the State Revolving Fund (SRF) that would provide low or no interest loans to assist with a sewer project if one is determined to be needed. Woodard and Curren is completing a State Revolving Fund application for FY14 at a cost of approximately \$4,000.

An invoice for work done by Woodard and Curren were presented and returned to the Town Manager for rework to remove charges for time spent itemizing and generating the invoice.

Another invoice for work done by CEI was presented and approved.

Action Items

- I. Tom O to remove current 6/13/13 minutes from the Town Website and replace with approved minutes
- II. Susan H to ask Ira to join us when CEI explains their findings
- III. Tom O to distribute historical nitrate test results from Whitney Well
- IV. Jack P to request that the Town Manager address the Woodard and Curren invoice.
- V. Tom O to get deliverables and dates from CEI
- VI. Tom O to post the newly provided Well testing data from CEI to the LLSC page
- VII. Jack P to begin the outline for the presentation for Town Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 8:45