

Lost Lake Watershed Advisory Committee (LLWAC)

Town of Groton, Groton, MA 01450 978-448-1111

Meeting Minutes - September 24, 2015

At Town Hall

Present: Mark Deuger, Susan Horowitz (BOH), John Petropoulos (BOS), Arthur Prest (Finance Comm.), Alex Woodle

Not present: Tom Orcutt (Groton Water Dept.), Michael Rosa

Visitors: none

Recorder: Stephen Legge

Call to Order: Chairman Prest called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM.

Prest announced he would be out of town for the period from September 30th to October 12th.

Approval of Minutes:

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of August 20, 2015 be approved. The minutes were approved as amended, unanimously.

Discussion of Request for Proposal (RFP) Responses Received by the Committee:

Four companies proposed: Aquatic Ecosystem Research, of Branford CT (AER); ESS, Lombardo Associates, and Normandeau.

Woodle ranked them top to bottom as follows: ESS, Lombardo, Normandeau and AER. He was impressed with the detail in the ESS proposal. Normandeau had an interesting limnology discussion and perspective on the difficulty of ground water studies – they are prohibitively expensive.

On ESS Woodle said they have proposed extensive studies, where Lombardo has proposed somewhat less. He thinks Lombardo is lacking the detail of ESS's and is a little disappointed with it. Also Lombardo proposed primarily septic system studies and has zeroed in on phosphorus as the culprit. ESS plans to measure nitrates as well as phosphates.

Woodle said AER's proposal has very little substance. Normandeau's is a lighter weight as well. On storm water management, Woodle said none of the proposers really flushed this out, although Normandeau said more than the others. He is disappointed with this aspect of the responses.

Petropoulos: Met with the Town Manager and the headmasters at Lawrence Academy (LA) and Groton School. LA is very interested in our project and they have a limnologist on the teaching staff.

Deuger did not rate the proposals. He feels all are “on par” and any of them would do an adequate job, probably. He was somewhat impressed with the AER proposal – it hits all the points. Lombardo is the only one to go into detail on septic analysis. It is probably the most responsive proposal. Deuger notes we have had significant prior discussions with two of the four proposers.

Deuger said it is important to develop a conceptual model in these studies as a starting point. It would help guide what should be done, what the main focus is, and what data is needed to fill the gaps. The final product should explain the logic for the conceptual model.

Of all the proposals, only ESS referred to DEP and EPA standards. They seem a little more on the ball in this way. Deuger wishes we could explore AER some more.

Horowitz: Mike Rosa said at an earlier meeting, don’t bother with Nitsch Engineering (they are teaming with Normandeau on their proposal), although in fairness, the earlier discussions were not totally connected to submission of a proposal.

As a clarification, Prest noted that we are not looking at the cost of proposals right now, because the process is to select a bidder who best meets the technical criteria that were set forth. Then the cost data will be made available.

Petropoulos: Normandeau is last – they have presumed the problem is phosphorus. Their proposal is a good detailed one, but he also worries that teaming with Nitsch, an engineering firm, is a conflict of interest. They may be influenced by solutions to problems, as opposed to finding out what the problems really are.

Petropoulos likes Lombardo – they listened to us. They focused on quantitative issues, proposed sampling as necessary. They developed a simple matrix summarizing answers to all of our questions. They will unequivocally tell us if wastewater is an issue. They could save the town millions (by heading off inappropriate conclusions), and say what really needs to be done.

Woodle commented we need more focus on septic, less on storm water management.

Petropoulos likes ESS best. The downside of their proposal is that they also presume that water quality is declining, based on phosphate levels. They say they can determine if nitrates are from waste water systems and they will give us a list of corrective actions, weighted by cost effectiveness. There is no engineering involved in this proposal.

Horowitz said she liked ESS from the start, and still does.

Mr. Orcutt, while not present, submitted a memo with his comments for Prest to read. He ranks the proposals top to bottom as follows: Normandeau, ESS, AER and Lombardo. He promised to provide more information later. He noted Nitsch Engineering does a lot of work in our town.

Prest said he learned a lot from all four proposers. His ranking is ESS first, with Lombardo a close second. He is, however, disappointed with the latter's proposal. On the other hand, they did do a great study of Lake Agawam (New York state) with a focus on chlorophyll and eutrophication of the lake. Prest thinks chlorophyll levels may be important for Lost Lake and he would like that tested. Prest did not care for either Normandeau's or AER's proposals. He said that both ESS and Lombardo each have at least one person on the project team who really know what to do.

There was a short discussion about whether or not it would be advisable to talk informally with some of the bidders. There could also be a question about propriety of doing this under the town's procurement rules. Need to discuss this with the Town Manager.

There was an informal consensus among members present that ESS is the #1 proposal. Deuger added that he likes Lombardo because of their focus on septic input and ground water quality.

Discussion of Process for Finishing Evaluation of Proposals:

The following questions were asked among members: When are cost bids opened? Can we talk informally with ESS and Lombardo? Horowitz asked do we have to take the lowest bid? Petropoulos said, no, not on consulting contracts. Can we ask ESS to add things to their proposal? Do we have to decide on the basis of the written proposal only?

Deuger said we should be thinking only about the technical proposals at this stage, and which do we prefer.

Deuger moved that based on the technical merits of proposals, the committee ranks proposals received from best to least, ESS, Lombardo, Normandeau and AER. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Woodle asked if it would be logical to have a paleo-limnologist do a study of the lakes by doing core samples. He claimed this would not be very hard to do.

Petropoulos made a motion to open cost bids at the next meeting, and to ask the top two technical candidates to be available (separately) for informal discussion of their bids, unless our procurement rules do not allow this. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Adjournment:

Woodle moved the meeting be adjourned. Deuger seconded. The meeting was adjourned with unanimous consent at 8:39 PM.

**** The next meeting is expected to be on Thursday October 15, 2015 at 7:00PM. ****