

Minutes not yet approved. Approval and
any edits to be made in succeeding minutes.

BROOKFIELD WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY
Wednesday, September 14, 2022, 7:00 p.m.
SPECIAL MEETING-PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION

1. **Convene Meeting**-Chairman N. Malwitz convened the meeting at 7:00 p.m., establishing a quorum of Commission members.

WPCA:

N. Malwitz
M. DelValle
J. Murray
L. Donovan
M. Brown

Others:

J. Siclari, Director
K. McPadden, Executive Administrator
J. Sienkiewicz, Attorney
T. Strid, Inspector
A. Kennedy, Project Coordinator

Chairman N. Malwitz introduced Facilitator Greg Dembowski. G. Dembowski explained the details of the meeting process, including the sign in sheet, the Q&A period, noting the meeting is being live streamed and recorded. He then introduced First Selectwoman Tara Carr.

2. **Welcome**-First Selectwoman T. Carr welcomed all to the information session and thanked the volunteers and employees working on this project. First Selectwoman Carr noted that she is also a resident of one of the project areas, Candlewood Lake Club on Indian Trail and she is trying to gather information and deliberate as well. She explained her relationship and interest in caring for the wellbeing and future of Candlewood Lake. She noted the increase in residents in this area over the last 2 years and how that affects the lake. First Selectwoman Carr encouraged the audience to review the Town Charter and suggest any recommended revisions to the Committee. She also discussed a meeting with neighboring towns that was held in May of this year to discuss this project and the issues with the lake. First Selectwoman Carr said after that meeting the attendees were in agreement that something needed to be done to help the lake.
3. **Introduction**-Chairman N. Malwitz explained the WPCA's Charter, stating that it is charged with dealing with pollution matters. He noted the Board consists of 8 Commission positions, two of which are currently open. He then gave a brief history of sewer in the Town of Brookfield. He said in 2018 the WPCA started working with the Candlewood Lake Authority to determine if the lake was a problem that might need to be addressed. Chairman Malwitz then referred to a slide, comparing satellite images of the lake on a clear day, as opposed to a day after three days of rain, detailing the phosphorus levels. He said from this slide we can see there is an impact of septic flow into the lake. Chairman Malwitz noted that First Light was here in support of the program. Chairman Malwitz said in 2019 the WPCA was awarded a Clean Water Fund Planning Grant to do a complete facilities plan for Brookfield, which is online, and to study the Candlewood Lake area to see if there was a wastewater environmental issue at the peninsula and how extensive it might be. He said both studies are available on the WPCA

website. He explained the selection process for choosing CDM Smith and Lombardo Associates to do these studies.

Chairman Malwitz said there was a septic survey that was done, and it showed there was a relatively high incident of issues including odors. He said about a third of the systems have had issues over the years and many of the lots are too small for code compliant systems.

A few members of the audience asked questions and the meeting Facilitator G. Dembowski asked that all questions and comments be held until the Q&A section of the meeting.

Chairman N. Malwitz said the reasons for the project to move forward are: elevated levels of phosphorus (proven in several ways), elevated levels of nitrogen and other contaminants in the drinking water, E-coli at high levels (enough to close the beaches) and the source of the E-coli has been determined to be human waste, not Canada geese.

Chairman Malwitz said along Dean and Pocono Roads there are 91 low-lying properties with non-compliant septic systems, that cannot be made compliant by today's standards. He said the Town Sanitarian has advocated for sewerage the area for the past decade, and it has long been tagged as an area of concern. He said studies show high levels of phosphorus in the drain fields and E-coli in the ground.

Chairman Malwitz then introduced Neil Stalter, Director of Ecology with Candlewood Lake Authority.

4. **Current Status of the Lake-Neil Stalter**-N. Stalter said the WPCA asked him to discuss the current status of the lake and a few of the trends they have been monitoring on the lake. He gave a brief description of eutrophication and what happens to lakes over time. He said in order to protect the lake, they try to slow that process down. He said when more people move to the area and enjoy the lake, that process speeds up. N. Stalter said the ways the process is sped up is through storm water, septic leaching, new impervious surface which increases run off, removing vegetation, etc. He said the current status of Candlewood Lake has existed in the middle of the spectrum (a mesotrophic lake) and this year the metrics of clarity and chlorophyll-A show the lake as average. He said the one remarkable thing that has happened to the lake this year is the loss of the plant material at the bottom of the lake. He said that is unrelated to water chemistry. N. Stalter said he would like everyone to understand that while the lake is existing in the middle of the spectrum and the WPCA is pursuing a course of action that may benefit the lake, the magnitude of that is something that he cannot say with any certainty.
5. **Introduction of CDM Smith**-Chairman N. Malwitz said the engineering team of CDM Smith was selected through the RFQ process needed for the Clean Water Fund Grant and gave a brief description of that process. He said CDM Smith then teamed up with Lombardo Associates and CCA, LLC. He said the presentation tonight is a snapshot of the planning process and will outline how the final design recommendations will be developed to come up with economical designs. He said there are no final connection plans, no final pump station locations and no final costs at this stage.
6. **Presentation**-CDM Smith: Candlewood Lake Drainage Area & Dean and Pocono Road Area Wastewater Management Studies Plan
J. Laliberte, Project Principal, CDM Smith, gave an overview of the company and the types of projects they are involved with. He gave an introduction of the team members with him, including Kristie Wagner-Project Technical Lead, Dan Murphy-Project Manager, Travis Reeser-Project Engineer and Pio Lombardo-Lombardo Associates.

K. Wagner began with an agenda of the presentation and then introduced Pio Lombardo.

P. Lombardo said he will speak to a summary of the work done previously, published in April 2020, having been done in the prior two years. He said the data is pretty recent, and still relevant. P. Lombardo said they have determined that the current practices are making contributions of phosphorus into Candlewood Lake. He said they worked to scientifically quantify the amount of phosphorus going into the lake and said the conditions on the peninsula are pretty uniform. He said they were able to conclude there is a fairly significant influence of septic systems on Candlewood Lake. He said they made this determination along with their professional colleagues, including Larry Marsicano. He said the conclusion was made that removing septic systems from the area would enhance the water quality of the lake and would slow down the eutrophication process. P. Lombardo said nitrate nitrogen drinking water violations have occurred in 2017 and the data now is that it's at about 8 ppm on nitrate nitrogen, with 10 ppm being the maximum. He said any place over 5 ppm is getting excessive septic influence. He noted that there are issues of concern other than nitrogen in wastewater management. P. Lombardo also discussed the letter from the Board of Health in which they recommended that the peninsula be sewered for public health reasons. He said regarding Dean and Pocono Roads, the area has a very high ground water situation, which makes it difficult for septic systems to operate, which usually causes public health problems.

K. Wagner discussed the project background and displayed a map of the study areas. She said that more than half the septic systems in the study areas are more than 50 years old and talked about the difficulties with upgrading to code compliant systems in these areas. K. Wagner said in general, the soil and ground conditions in these study areas are not always conducive to nutrient removal in septic systems. She noted the high costs involved with replacing malfunctioning septic systems.

K. Wagner reviewed pros and cons of sanitary sewers in the project study areas, pros including elimination of septic systems, increased property values, improved lake water quality, improved drinking water quality, reduced risk of beach closures, less residential maintenance and the cons including disruption with construction, sewer capacity needs, and cost.

K. Wagner then discussed the current phase of the study at this time. She gave an overview of the alternatives analysis. She said the range of options include STEP/STEG systems, gravity sewers, community pump stations and grinder pumps. She explained that some of these options were lower cost, and that is one of the major concerns being reviewed. K. Wagner gave a brief explanation of each option, and the reasons why each option is being reviewed. She reviewed the challenging topography of the area and how the cost analysis will be performed. K. Wagner also reviewed the next steps that would happen if the project was to go forward. She said at the conclusion of the planning study, the WPCA would make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Finance and the Planning Commission. Then it would have to go to Town Meeting and Referendum vote before any funds could be appropriated for this project.

K. Wagner discussed project financing, noting that this project would be eligible for CT DEEP Clean Water Funding, which is typically a 20% Grant and a low interest loan for the balance. She said there would be an ongoing investigation for other grant opportunities that could possibly lower the initial cost to the town. She said the net cost would then be

paid for by benefit assessments on the properties that are being improved by sewer services. She said historically, the benefit assessments have been less than 10% of their assessed value and that cost level is being evaluated at this time.

K. Wagner said the analysis will be completed, they will look at flows and treatment options, cost analysis will be done, and they anticipate having recommendations in Spring 2023.

7, 8 & 9. Discussion Topics, Public Comment and Closing Remarks

K. Wagner said the WPCA has received hundreds of questions in the last few weeks and a living document has been published on the WPCA website, with all questions received up to a few days ago. She said they have given preliminary responses and will add to it as new questions come in. She said they have a summary of responses to the overall themes of concerns and noted there is a handout available for their review.

J. Laliberte talked about the handout of Summary Responses and read some of the information aloud. He noted they have received a 55% planning grant for the efforts to date which is being funded by CT DEEP, and they are in full support of this project. He said there were a lot of questions about the cost estimate and the alternatives which will be updated, and in the Spring of 2023 they will be able to present those updates. He explained some of the preliminary answers to the questions submitted, noting again that they are in the planning phase at this time.

G. Dembowski asked if anyone wanted to take a break before the public comment and the audience agreed to keep the meeting going without a break. G. Dembowski asked the audience not to ask the same questions after they have already been asked, and to form a line behind the podium. He explained all the questions and comments will be heard and then the presenters will make general responses. Any additional questions after this meeting can be sent in to the WPCA and the answers will be updated online.

- Angelo Aldana, 64 S. Lakeshore Dr.-He said he heard many statements that were factually incorrect and asked about data from P. Lombardo's report. He asked why we didn't follow the same process as Bantam Lake and why they jumped to sewers as the solution. He said if the Authority could show that the lake is seriously polluted and that septic systems were the cause, not other sources, everyone would be more concerned.
- Deirdre Coury, 57 Skyline Dr.-She asked if any other towns that border Candlewood Lake have sewers for their lake properties. She asked if Brookfield builds a plant, will we eventually sell capacity to other towns. She asked has First Light or CLA initiated any plans for a cross town coordinated approach for sewer. She asked about a study of the Housatonic. She asked if the public could be given a spreadsheet list of the properties identified in the study. She asked about properties near and bordering the lake that are not included. She asked if there was any plan to address the financial burden for residents that have fixed incomes. She asked if the Candlewood Shores Tax District (CSTD), which owns their own roads, were to deny access to their roads what could/would the WPCA do. She asked why they aren't looking at everyone who benefits from the use of the lake all over the state.

She asked if there has been any conflict-of-interest study done into owners of vacant properties in these areas who may be able to build multi-family housing after getting access to sewers. She asked why there is not an option to address failing septic systems and a cost analysis for that option.

- Todd Dawson, North Lakeshore Drive-He asked about a slide shown in the presentation and asked about the phosphorus levels in the reservoir on Route 37 in the watershed area. He asked about why we would only pump liquid waste and not solid waste.
- Gail Strickler, Arrowhead Road-She asked about repairing failing septic systems. She asked why the other towns on the lake are not here.
- John, Longview Dr-He asked about the ppb of the phosphorus levels and asked about stormwater.
- John Moro, 7 Longview Drive-He asked about what the map on the slide shown would have looked like 50 years ago. He discussed his observations from that time compared to now and he believes the lake is in much better condition now.
- Barry Gerstein, 136 North Lakeshore Drive-He commented on the slide shown in the presentation and commented on statistics from the reports on the WPCA website, implying the information is not consistent. He also compared these reports to the Marsicano Report.
- Dave Sluti, Candlewood Lake Road-He asked would people afford this project and could they get any help from the state.
- Gail Miner, 18 South Lakeshore Drive-She asked about the speaker from Waterloo University who spoke about septic systems on lakefront properties at a previous meeting regarding potential sewer service.
- Joe Voves, Arrowhead Road-He asked Tara Carr why Brookfield is leading the charge when there are four other municipalities bordering the lake. He asked about the conversations being had between the five municipalities.
- John Bevilacqua, 3 Bayview Drive-He asked why so much information was not presented tonight, but instead the audience was directed to the website. He asked about the slide shown in the presentation and asked for more information. He asked for more information to be presented at the next meeting. He said the presentation tonight sounded like a sales pitch. He asked when we would have a decision.
- Jerry McStravick-He suggested getting the five towns together on this project. He commented on the abundance of boats on the lake, with no revenue coming into the town. He said this is a regional problem and a CT problem and the Governor should be involved. He noted the representative from CLA said there was no guarantee this would help the lake at all.
- Scott Hartman, Arrowhead Road-He asked about dredging the lake to deal with the sediment. He noted a comment made previously about the pump-up systems, which did not fully explain the cost and maintenance of these systems.
- Mark Vicerca, Candlewood Shores-He asked about the capacity issues, and asked about the Shores being made to fund a new sewer treatment plant that will then service multi-family properties. He said this is not the right time to do this project given the state of the economy.
- Bruce Alexander, North Lakeshore Drive-He said he has a problem with the format of the meeting and wants to hear the answers right away after each question is asked.

- Adele Brunicki, 13 Lakeview Drive-She said the grant the WPCA received was for this study, and this project was already submitted for IJA funds, and we scored very low for these funds, and will likely not get that grant.
- Joe Grimes-He asked where the other 45% of the funding for this study has come from, and if the current sewer users are aware that they are funding this project. He said the capacity issue should be resolved before the study is completed.
- Kate Diaz, 43 Berkshire-She asked what will happen for people on fixed incomes. She asked for transparency.
- Bruce Goldsen, 94 North Lakeshore Drive-He said it doesn't seem moral or ethical for the whole town to vote on this referendum.
- Julie Blick, 131 Candlewood Lake Road-She asked if her property could be added to the project as she needs sewer. She also said that she works in New Fairfield and has heard that other towns will be involved in the project.

Responses

First Selectwoman Tara Carr said that Governor Lamont had visited Brookfield a few months ago, and she invited him back to the lake, but he has yet to return. She also discussed the ongoing capacity issues. She encouraged the audience to reach out to their elected officials regarding help for the lake. T. Carr also discussed Brookfield's current form of government regarding the referendum questions. She also discussed transparency efforts and the high costs associated with mailings. She said it is very unlikely we will get the grant money we need to address this situation. She asked for anyone with recommended solutions to bring them forward.

Chairman N. Malwitz said this study is being pursued as due diligence. He discussed a similar lake in NJ, and the results of that area after not being addressed. He also referenced Lake Kenosia and sewerage a trailer park in that area. He discussed the difficulties associated with a multi-jurisdictional lake.

Larry Marsicano, former Director of CLA, discussed a report from 1983 when the state was doing a lot of work in the big lakes. He talked about phosphorus levels, soils, and sediments in the lake. He also discussed Bantam Lake. L. Marsicano referenced the growth of the communities around the lake and how that correlates to the health of the lake. He also discussed algae blooms in the lake. He noted that there are some things they can control, and other things they cannot control. He discussed the phosphorus levels in the Housatonic River and how that relates to the levels in the lake.

Pio Lombardo responded to questions regarding the other factors affecting the water quality of the lake. He said they made the best estimates as possible about the delta that septic systems influence on the lake. He said they know what the delta is, which is what they have control to do something about. P. Lombardo said their job here was to comment on proper wastewater management.

Joe Laliberte, CDM Smith, said they are very early in the planning process. He said the team will take all of these comments to heart. He said they need to review the basis and need of the project, the alternatives of how to do the project, flexibility of properties to be included, and alternatives involving fixing septic systems.

A member of the audience asked for the results of the borings and soil testing, and J. Laliberte said they would provide those results.

J. Laliberte responded to the comment about having more information available at the meeting as opposed to on the website, and they will work on that for the next meeting.

A member of the audience asked about what First Light would be contributing to this project financially (First Light owns the lake).

J. Laliberte said there are some efforts they can continue to make while waiting for the resolution of the capacity issues. He commented on the question regarding the possible wastewater treatment plant in Brookfield and whether capacity will be sold.

J. Laliberte said this is not a sales pitch and they hope it doesn't come across that way. He said they are trying to do the job they were hired to do. He also discussed the benefits to the properties and communities from extending sewers into the area.

A member of the audience asked where the other 45% of the funds came from for this study. Chairman N. Malwitz said it is from the budget of the WPCA.

G. Dembowski asked the audience to send any additional questions to the two email addresses provided: candlewoodlake@brookfieldwpca.org and deanpoconoroad@brookfieldwpca.org

A member of the audience asked a few additional questions and comments, including limiting the number of boats on the lake, speaking with First Light about runoff, etc. First Selectwoman T. Carr addressed a few questions and invited the audience members to contact her directly.

Karen Carter, 11 Lakeview Road-She asked about the necessity of sewers in this area and said she is not convinced this will be the answer. She commented on the monitoring of septic pumping, the quality of the drinking water, which she said is tested yearly. She discussed possible alternatives to improving lake quality.

J. Laliberte said there were prior studies done and they need to revisit and present that. He said typically fixing and replacing septic systems is more expensive than sewers.

10. Adjournment - A motion was made by L. Donovan to adjourn at 9:43 P.M. The motion was seconded by J. Murray and passed unanimously.