**Town of Agawam, MA**
**Stormwater System Assessment and Utility/Fee Planning**

**Citizen Advisory Task Force Meeting #2**
**June 7, 2017**

**Meeting Summary**

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| **Meeting Date:** | Wednesday June 7, 2017 |
| **Time:** | 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. |
| **Location:** | Agawam Public Library, 750 Cooper St, Agawam, MA |
| **Prepared by:** | Rich Niles (Amec Foster Wheeler)<br>Elizabeth Flanary (Amec Foster Wheeler) |

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Attached for reference are the attendee sign-in sheet and meeting agenda and below are the next steps, followed by a summary of key discussion and information related to the project.

**Next Steps:**

- Refine future stormwater program cost estimates
- Continue to update the GIS database and conduct the impervious area analysis
- Roll out web page with interactive map
- Engage public through press releases and future meetings
- Plan for Task Force Meeting #3 at the end of June or mid-July

**Summary:**

### 1. Review of Task Force Meeting #1

Chris Golba provided introductory remarks and Rich Niles presented a summary of Task Force Meeting #1. The first meeting discussed the Town's current stormwater system challenges, inventory of present infrastructure, existing services, and known problem areas. The initial Task Force poll results indicate that the top priorities are aging infrastructure, flooding problems, and erosion of channels and streams.

### 2. Existing Stormwater Program Costs

The key activities performed by the existing stormwater program were broken down and summarized by function.

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1. **Stormwater Program Administration:** involves project coordination, grant application and general administration.
2. **Stormwater Operations and Maintenance:** involves infrastructure repair, cleaning, and maintenance, e.g., street sweeting and catch basin repairs.
3. **Drainage Engineering and Stormwater Management Planning:** relates to all system inspection, mapping, and planning/design efforts. Public involvement and outreach also falls under this category.
4. **Regulatory Compliance/Enforcement:** covers MS4 permit compliance, review of stormwater plans, and construction inspection and reporting.
5. **Stormwater Capital Improvement Projects and Equipment:** involves funding for minor projects such as drainage improvement, major projects such as new infrastructure, and equipment costs.

The current cost for each function was then summarized, with Stormwater Operations and Maintenance accounting for the largest portion with the majority of the effort as labor costs. The labor costs pertaining to stormwater were broken out from the overall DPW budget. In total, stormwater labor efforts require approximately four full-time employees that represent partial efforts by numerous staff across administrative, engineering and operational categories. It was noted that stormwater activities in Town are very decentralized and spread across several different departments and parts of the Public Works operation. The "whole picture" costs approach with the current stormwater budget provides the ability to prepare an analogous future program budget that can better address questions and answers about future needs.

It was noted that the current stormwater budget does not include funding for capital projects and that the overall level of effort to meet future needs exceeds current funding levels.

### 3. Future Stormwater Program Costs

The project team and Town staff have evaluated future needs to identify all of the known and potential areas where increased funding will be required. The following are examples of areas where the needs are increasing:

- Numerous drainage infrastructure and culvert replacement projects that need repair.
- Increased maintenance and education for private and public detention pond systems.
- The updated MS4 permit will place more stringent requirements upon the Town that will require increases in engineering, inspections, and cleaning activities (e.g., street sweeping and catch basin cleaning).

The presentation illustrates the number of major and minor stormwater activities that occur and will increase to more sustainably manage the storm drain infrastructure and permit compliance. It is important to look at all stormwater-related costs (even engineering software) to emphasize the fact that there are a variety of stormwater program needs that will need to be managed in a more cohesive and comprehensive manner. This approach will benefit the public in a number of ways, but will also result in more efficient management and maximize the use of available funds.

Town staff emphasized that MS4 permit compliance is an unfunded Federal mandate, thus the onus is on the Town to meet certain requirements and bear the associated costs. Many of the

future needs (e.g., aging infrastructure), however, exist regardless of the MS4 permit requirements. The Town is trying to develop a better stormwater management program to address known problems and more sustainably manage its infrastructure.

Preliminary estimates show the budget will almost double from current expenditures to the annual average projected costs for the next 5 years. The following key items were discussed with the Task Force:

- Increased labor efforts for storm drain system repairs, engineering, and administration represent the single largest increase to the future budget.
- Under the updated MS4 permit, the street sweeping and catch basin cleaning requirements represent one of the largest operational cost increases.
- The future stormwater program includes a budget of $250K for minor and major capital projects to address aging infrastructure and build projects to improve or upgrade the storm drain system. This is an initial budget will need to be refined over time and will likely increase. The funding analysis for this project will consider a range of funding for capital projects.
- Town staff noted that the DPW may have difficulty managing and spending a large capital budget at this time. The department is at capacity to meet current demands with the present manpower. Additional dedicated stormwater staff would be required to handle the future increase.
- Task Force members commented that if people are paying a separate stormwater bill, the funding level should be adequate such that they can see tangible results for their funds. A higher level of service that shows results would be preferable to a program with less funding that only provides minimal services.

## 4. Levels of Service and Funding Options

Possible Levels of Service for stormwater were described, with options ranging from the minimum to meet permit requirements, to a level that would provide an exceptional level of service. The ideal range would be in the moderate (enough capital to show improvement from existing) to high (significant improvement) level of service. Task Force members wanted to see the funding analysis and impacts to property owners before developing a final recommendation. Levels of Service will continue to be evaluated as part of the future funding analysis.

A brief introduction to funding options was provided and Task Force members asked multiple questions related to the concept of an enterprise fund (stormwater utility), which are included in the discussion below.

## 5. Questions and Additional Discussion

While the focus of Task Force Meeting #2 was the current and future stormwater program costs, the following items were discussed based on questions by Task Force members and will be addressed in further detail in subsequent meetings:

- How would fees be assessed under a stormwater utility? Will it be based on data and how would it be calculated? Amec Foster Wheeler will perform an analysis of the

Town's data for impervious surfaces by parcel to develop options for a fee-based approach to fund the stormwater program. This will be the focus of Meeting #3 and subsequent meetings.

- How can properties mitigate their fee and what are the options? Property owners can reduce impervious surfaces or apply for a credit for systems that exist or are constructed to treat stormwater before it enters the Town's system. This was discussed briefly and will be discuss in more detail in subsequent meetings.
- How is the fee system structured and managed? Billing units are calculated for all properties and the total stormwater cost is divided by the number of billing units to calculate the cost per billing unit. Each property is then billed based its number of billing units.
- Would the stormwater fee be billed with taxes or a utility bill? There are multiple options and this will be evaluated during the course of the project.

All of the above questions will be addressed in more detail during subsequent meetings and Task Force members will be asked to provide their opinions and recommendations for a variety of policies related to data, funding, and management topics.

## 6. Public Engagement

Patty Gambarini provided an overview of the goals and objectives of the public engagement component of the project and facilitated a discussion of messages and activities with the Task Force. This included a discussion of the following:

- A draft press release that was prepared for review by the Task Force. Task Force members had no recommendations for changes. The press release will be posted in one or more media outlets.
- Updates to the Town website to dedicate a page to the project where information can be posted (e.g., agendas and presentations) with a link to the interactive map that was previously developed to report and track stormwater issues and information. In general, the Task Force felt that this would be helpful for public engagement and to direct people who are seeking information on the project.
- Questions for Task Force members on engagement messaging and methods. Patty led a brainstorming session on several questions. This information and a summary of the results are provided in **Tables 1 and 2** below.

    1. ***Are there specific groups of people we should reach? If yes, who?***
    2. ***What are your thoughts on most effective ways to engage a wider audience in talking about stormwater? (e.g., interviews, focus group, other?)***

**Table 1. Public Groups to Engage and Potential Methods**

| 1. Specific groups noted | 2. Ideas for ways to reach groups |
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| a. Senior citizens | Join them for luncheon at the Senior Center and then hold "office hours" for them to come talk individually |
| b. Detention pond owners | Door hangers, mailing, separate meeting |

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| c. People who live and work in area of Town where there are stormwater problems | Mailer, neighborhood meetings |
| d. Businesses | Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Club |
| e. Large property owners (owners with large impervious surfaces) | Chamber of Commerce, direct mailings, small group meetings |
| f. Senior leadership | City Council or legislative committee workshop, or even during citizen speak at regular meeting (not a lot of time provided though) |
| g. High school students | National Honors Society, social media |
| h. Taxpayers | Mailer, possibly the tax bill, social media |
| i. Condo owners | Condo association meetings<br>Note: need to help them understand stormwater (some still don't understand that there is no trash pick-up at condos) |

Other methods noted to reach people:

- Inserts in *Agawam Advertiser News* local paper, especially August Back to School issue when do "total market saturation" mailing of newspaper
- City-wide notification system "Red" - can set up specific distribution list and then link to have posted
- Local cable access station (Jeff Hulbert, IT Director is contact)
- Summer concert series (hand out flyers)
- Harvest Festival

***3. What are major concerns you think we might anticipate?***
***4. What do you think are meaningful responses to these concerns?***

**Table 2. Major Concerns and Meaningful Responses**

| **3. Major concerns noted** | **4. Meaningful responses to concerns noted** |
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| a. Not understanding language, especially things like "impaired" waterway? | This information is part of the stormwater program and regulatory requirements (use fact sheets). |
| b. Why is there a need for dollars, new fee? | Present a comprehensive and clear picture of costs to responsibly manage the storm drain system. |
| c. This is an unfunded mandate. | Talk about benefits of compliance – more cohesive program. Focus on infrastructure needs and real problems that exist regardless of regulatory mandates. |

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| d. Fairness, especially if no obvious drainage on or near your property. | Emphasize the program elements and management of the public infrastructure that everyone uses and benefits from (e.g., reduced flooding). |
| e. Fairness, especially if you are a property owner who does not contribute to stormwater budget now. | Present current funding approach (taxes) and future options, pros and cons. |
| f. Expectations/results. | Present on the future level of service (activities) and what projects will be able to do (i.e., solve problems). |
| g. How do you determine who pays what and how to assess fees? | Present rate structure options and data to support funding approach. |
| h. Can't control rainfall that's falling (like you can control how much drinking water you used). | Impervious surface is used a surrogate for rainfall – important to cover cost of service to manage the public system and the burden from individual properties. |
| i. Property to property comparisons and capturing credit. | Use property-specific data and examples. |