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TOWN OF ACTON  
BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 25, 1986

The meeting opened at 7:35 p.m. Present were Chairman Dan Costello, Richard Stephens, Eleanor Voorhies, George Emmons, and Associate member Richard Oakley. Staff present were Deborah Robertson, Acting Director and Carol Holley, sec'y.

7:40 Review of minutes and correspondence. The new project at Great Road Crossing was discussed.

7:51 Richard Stephens moved to accept the minutes as amended. George Emmons seconded. Eleanor Voorhies, Richard Stephens and George Emmons voted to accept; Mr. Costello abstained.

7:54 Under old business, the Bellows Farms project was discussed and a draft letter to Keystone Associates notifying them of their permit was reviewed.

8:01 Mr. Napoli, Variance to drill well. After an extensive discussion of the cost estimates for town water hookup versus drilling of a private well, it was determined that the expense of hooking up to Town Water could be construed as a hardship due to excessive costs. The Board carefully reviewed the figures in relation to the total worth of the property and the probable monthly payment increase should mortgage financing be used to drill the well. The presence of ledge and the distance from the proposed residence to the water main was discussed. Miss Voorhies moved to grant the permit to drill a well, Mr. Emmons seconded, and the vote was unanimous in favor.

8:22 Priscilla Greene, Nursing Service and Simione and Simione, consulting firm. A proposal submitted by Simione and Simione regarding the future of the Acton Public Health Nursing Service was discussed in detail. The impact of Emerson Hospital's entrance on the home health care market was discussed in relation to the Medicare/Medicaid market. The probability of working out an arrangement with Nashoba Associated Boards of Health Nursing Service was also discussed.

Mr. Simione stated that to try to come up with actual numbers regarding Emerson's impact on the Nursing Service was difficult. Mrs. Greene stated that Emerson referrals were less than half their business. Emerson started soliciting the Acton market themselves about two years ago. Mr. Stephens said the issue was the Town making assumptions as to what the number of referrals will be, and calculating the effects of this on the Town. He stated that Acton might not have to be cost competitive with Nashoba or Emerson, and that one has to consider other advantages to the Town. Miss Voorhies expressed concern over the impact of Multigroup's merger with Harvard Health on the Nursing Service operation. The influence the local medical group, which had a contract with APHNS, over the total Harvard organization is an unknown. Mrs. Greene expressed concern regarding lowering of cost caps. Mr. Simione stated that the lowering of caps and the rising of costs will greatly change the prospect of home health care. He stated that a lot of agencies are simply closing their doors. It was stated that a Town agency does not necessarily have to operate in the black, and the Town had to decide, as funds come from tax dollars. A Simione & Simione staff member stated that costs came in higher than charges. She felt APHNS charges should be raised in order to keep published charges over costs. Mrs. Greene stated that Nashoba's published rates were lower than APHNS, and Emerson's were higher.

Mrs. Greene further stated that a majority of visits have been denied reimbursement by Medicare. The same services that were considered intermittent and covered one year ago no longer are so considered or covered. Mr. Simione stated that there is a constant battle with Medicare, which generates even more costs in staff time. Joanne of Simeone and Simeone stated that the visits are denied coverage after the fact, and there are no other resources for coverage. Mr. Stephens suggested that the Town might hire just one public nurse if it abandons APHNS. Mrs. Greene enumerated the advantages of the nursing service that would be lost in that event. It was stated that Emerson is willing to absorb a loss in the home health care area in order to be able to provide continuity of care provision, and they have the profits in other areas of their operation to cover the losses. Mrs. Greene stated that Nashoba is very optimistic about their financial health. Mr. Stephens stated that, since a change of administration is forthcoming at APHNS, he would like to look at a management plan. Mr. Stephens also asked if there were an economy of scale in a nursing service. Mrs. Greene stated that if Nashoba hooked up with Acton it would give them a geographical base to expand into contiguous areas of Westford, Concord, etc. using APHNS personnel. Simeone stated that he felt Nashoba was looking to tap into the HMO market. Mr. Stephens stated that for three years the APHNS has run with more than the preferred amount of costs, but still less than costs could be. He expressed concern that if the service base eroded, deficits would not be justified by the services rendered. The question is whether it is appropriate business for this Town to be a health care agency. Mrs. Greene stated that it would be good to have an evaluation of APHNS. Simeone stated that he had revised their proposal. Miss Voorhies requested an objective study. Simeone & Simeone is going to redraft and resubmit their proposal at a future date.

9:14 Brook Run Condominiums.

Mrs. Robertson reported on Brook Run's second request for a peroxide treatment, which was approved subject to their bringing before the Board of Health a proposal for repair. The peroxide treatment had been scheduled but postponed due to the presence of 650 gal of run-off water which had infiltrated the system. No corrective actions have been taken to date to alleviate the effects of surface water on the system. Erik of Brook Run presented three other areas to use in the meantime to help out the system: (1) regrade the driveway to help alleviate run-off, (2) install low-flow fixtures in the units, and (3) install a meter on the well serving the condos to determine water usage. They were to effect these measures during the month of December and the condo should come before the Board at a later date to determine what other measures are required. Mr. Costello stated that it appeared the system was seriously overloaded. Mr. Stephens if there were any unusual circumstances. Mrs. Robertson stated that the surface water run-off was a serious problem. The run-off has a direct shot from Rte 2A down the driveway to the condominium's septic system. Several factors contribute to the situation. If there are still problems after the three measures are enacted, there will be adequate time before the peroxide treatment wears off to initiate major repair work. Erik stated that the units had garbage disposals. Another owner stated that removal of disposals had been discussed. Tenants have been asked to not use the disposals. Upon query about disposal removal by Mr. Costello, the owners objected to cost of removal.

Mrs. Robertson stated that all the measures to extend the life of the system will be in place by the end of December and the condo will submit to the Board of Health the results of the program. Miss Voorhies moved to accept Brook Run's proposal. Mr. Stephens seconded. The vote was unanimous to accept the proposal.

9:40 p.m. Meineke Muffler. Mr. Yetman and Jack Dunphy of Acton Survey & Engineering appeared before the Board regarding repair of septic system at Meineke Muffler shop on Main Street. Mr. Dunphy discussed the 1985 plan for the proposed repair, which is quite expensive. Daily water usage at the facility is 23-53 gallons per day. As an alternative to the septic system they would like to be able to install a tight tank of 5,000 capacity, made of pre-cast concrete which would require pumping, given a flow of 60 gallons per day, every 13 weeks. A high-water alarm can be built into the tank. After installation, maintenance of this system would cost Mr. Yetman \$1,300/year. A two-piece tank, with seam above groundwater level, would be used. It would not be vulnerable to groundwater pressure. Mr. Stephens asked if a leaching field were on the premises. Mr. Dunphy stated that it had been removed with the original gasoline tanks and fixtures. No plans were available. The facility was originally built in 1956. Mr. Costello asked about floor drains. It was stated that they are inoperable. Mr. Dunphy felt that no floor drains were required under the plumbing code. Mr. Stephens asked where water used for cooling went. Mr. Yetman stated some evaporated, some puddled on the floor and was tracked out. No brake work is done at the site. The toilet facilities would be one toilet and two sinks. Dunphy stated that the original repair plan would cost \$70,000 - \$100,000. He stated that the soil in the area is poor and that water has been found at 5-6 feet down. Soil quality is the bigger factor. The area of the lot is about 1200 square feet. Mr. Costello stated that no matter what, a variance would be required. The question is whether the variance would be for a tight tank or the size of the bed. Mr. Dunphy stated that a minimal system, just a leaching area, would cost \$40,000 - \$50,000. Everything would have to be excavated to natural subgrade. It would be extremely difficult to construct a leaching area. It would cost \$3,100 - \$3,200 to install the tight tank. Total cost of a tight tank system would be about \$5,000. Mr. Emmons stated that if this were a short-term solution it would be viable for the interim required as long as the usage of the property remains the same use. Mrs. Robertson expressed her opinion that the state granted tight tank variances only when, if a sewer system or leaching area becomes available, the tight tank is abandoned. The tight tank variance is not granted, historically, for economic reasons. Mrs. Robertson asked if a subsurface system could be installed without an interceptor drain. Mr. Dunphy felt that if, as was believed, the water was moving from Redstone downhill, an interceptor would be required. The rest of the drainage could be accomplished by subdrain. Mr. Dunphy suggested that the matter be tabled while they could provide the Health Dept. with a copy of the DEQE material on tight tanks. Mrs. Robertson expressed concern over whether a tight tank would be allowed or not on this site. Dunphy stated that DEQE recognized cost as a factor. Mr. Costello also suggested the matter be tabled pending consideration of other options besides tight tank. Incinerating toilets were discussed. It was suggested that Mr. Dunphy explore what the Water District does regarding water disposal. Miss Voorhies moved to table. Mr. Stephens seconded. After a discussion on extension on the performance bond, it was moved to table the matter and not extend the bond formally.

10:28 Mr. Hastings of Schofield Brothers for Sun Oil, Sunrise Sunoco. Mrs. Robertson related a telephone conversation with Mike Cosmo of Schofield Brothers. They have been doing a survey of water usage and are in the process of converting it to design data. Figures will be submitted to the Board at the next meeting and within 2-3 weeks after that design of the system should be essentially completed. Sun Oil wants to tear the existing structure down and erect a canopy, small snack shop, and four pump islands. There would be one restroom for the individual on duty only. No mechanical bays would be built. Water usage would be minimal. A regular leaching system can probably be designed. Some type of interceptor drain will be required along the Main Street side. The soil perced at 34 minutes per inch. The problem is to submit a system design based on 4 islands. Mr. Hastings asked about gas tank installation and was told double-walled tanks would be required. An early spring construction date is estimated. The only item requiring a variance will be the perc rate. Mrs. Robertson stated she wished the Board to establish a time-table for this site. The matter was continued to December 9 pending receipt of the figures from Schofield Brothers. Final action will be taken December 9. The motion to table passed unanimously.

10:40 Redstone Condominiums. Mrs. Robertson asked for an update. Mr. Silman spoke regarding his petition at Town Meeting for the Kelley's Corner area study. One leaching field serves buildlngs B&C and another serves building A. Both fields are totally saturated and clogged, and run-off cannot be controlled. There is no area on the property that can be used for back-up leaching. Ledge is at 4 feet. Total excavation of existing fields would be required. Over \$7,000 has been spent already on engineering studies. Mrs. Robertson expressed a concern over what is going to be done pending the outcome of the study. Mr. Emmons wondered if a non-conventional repair could be done. Mr. Silman stated that even with a package treatment plant, you still have to leach somewhere. Mrs. Robertson asked what could be done about the real health problem while a cost-effective solution is being researched. Mr. Emmons stated that there are two problems: damage control, and long range solutions. There must be some way to cut down on the overflow. Mr. Silman stated that Comeau had told him that the system was overloaded by ground water and not by resident usage. Upon query by Mr. Emmons, Mr. Silman stated that about half the units have water saving devises installed. Mr. Emmons asked what was going to happen in the spring. Mr. Oakley expressed concern that water saving devices were not installed in all units. Mr. Costello stated that the Board can issue a formal order to install low-flow devices and perhaps install tight tanks. The order might consider the elimination of washing machines and dishwashers. We have to find a way to solve the problem or bridge the gap. Mr. Stephens wished to pursue the treatment plant approach with a single field that can be de-watered enough to use. Mr. Costello stated that the front field may be made to work. Mr. Costello felt that digging up the pavement or drilling for an initial exploration might be possible for a new field area. Mr. Costello stated that Redstone had to implement gap-bridging procedures. Mr. Silman agreed to retain Fred DeFeo. The Board will meet on December 16 at 8 p.m. with Mr. DeFeo regarding Redstone.

11:26 p.m. MacDonald's. Carlos Davis and Jack Dunphy. Water usage has been checked - 1700 to 2600 gallons per day, currently. The septic system was

installed in 1977. There is a 600 gallon grease trap, 5,000 tank, 1500 gallon pump chamber, and leaching area of 2712 square feet. In 1975-1977 the average daily flow was 1843 gallons per day. In 1982 bonuses were awarded for water conservation and consumption dropped to 1100-1200 gallons per day. How much of the water supplied to the facility was actually going into the septic system was asked. Ways of measuring this was discussed. Mr. Dunphy recommended that taking this measurement be done, in fact must be done over a period of time at difference times. Mr. Costello asked if pump cycles could be recorded. Mr. Dunphy stated that a peroxide treatment had been done about three years ago. He suggested more core borings be taken. The pump chamber needs to be checked out also. He is trying to work from the outside of the system in to evaluate the situation. Mr. Costello asked about grease. Mr. Dunphy stated that this would be addressed. The run to the grease trap is short and may be elongated to provide more cooling. Regarding interior water use, the bathroom area was discussed. Mr. Costello asked about managerial turnover and a training program in septic system maintenance. Mr. Dunphy recommended installation of low-flow devices and training of the managers in water usage awareness. Grease from fryolators gets recycled. Mr. Costello requested a time span for completion of research on the system. Mr. Dunphy stated two months to determine where the problems are. There is no large jump in water usage between summer and winter. Mr. Davis stated that a maintenance man knowledgeable in septic system care was required. It was requested that Dunphy submit a 30-day progress report. In 60 days, he will come before the Board with his findings.

12:10 p.m. Eleanor Voorhies moves to adjourn. Meeting unanimously adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Holley  
Carol Holley, Secretary

Signed and approved,

Daniel Costello  
Daniel Costello, Chairman