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DATE Sept 29, 1987

Barbara Brown  
TOWN CLERK, ACTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN AND BOARD OF HEALTH  
JOINT MEETING, AUGUST 25, 1987  
BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES

Selectmen present were Don Gilberti, Dore Hunter, Nancy Tavernier, Chuck Kostro, William Weeks. Board of Health members present were Daniel Costello, Charlotte Sagoff, George Emmons, Richard Oakley. Staff present were Doug Halley, Health Director and Carol Holley, Secretary.

Selectman Don Gilberti called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Mr. Gilberti made some opening remarks regarding the closure of the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District and stated that the Board of Health was invited because they license the septage haulers. The issue of a combined treatment plant was noted but was considered to be a long range solution not applicable to the situation at hand.

Mr. Costello noted that the only community that will offer Acton a contract is Upper Blackstone, and this is a five year renewable contract. No other facilities offer a contract. The Town has to consider a long-range, self sufficient solution to this program. Mrs. Sagoff questioned whether or not Upper Blackstone would be a sure thing.

Mr. Gilberti summarized a memorandum regarding the Fitchburg facility. Mr. Halley stated that this facility, according to his sources, will only allow 1,000 gallons an hour. The pumpers, if this is the case, will not use this facility. Mr. Gilberti stated that under those circumstances Fitchburg was not a reasonable alternative. Mr. Gilberti then asked the Board of Health if Acton should then go to Upper Blackstone.

Mr. Costello replied that Upper Blackstone involves a five year contract, and this is the only thing the Board of Health currently sees as a short-term solution. Mr. Kostro noted the financial arrangements for Upper Blackstone. Mr. Halley affirmed this. Acton will have to expend the monies via a line article or an enterprise fund.

Mr. Emmons related that details of the septage program with issuance of tickets by the Town would have to be evolved. He noted that this seems to entail a lot of extra work for staff. Mr. Costello stated that the Town could charge administrative fees. Mr. Emmons noted that this will increase costs further.

Mr. Halley stated that the pumpers estimate they will charge \$200-\$250 per 1,000 gallon pumping. Mr. Johnson stated that it would be about 120 miles of travelling for the trucks round trip. Mr. Emmons added that this entails time as well as miles for the pumpers. The efficiency per day will go down for the pumpers.

Mr. Hunter stated that the Town could negotiate a contract with Upper Blackstone and the pumpers would not want to go there. Then there would not be enough pumpers. Mr. Emmons envisioned the possibility of the Town setting up its own pumping fleet.

Mr. Weeks noted that the price becomes what the market will bear.

Mr. Emmons stated that raised prices will keep people from pumping as often as they should.

Mr. Hunter related that Greater Lawrence is closing very soon, and asked if there were any steps that could be taken to buy time and perhaps extend timing of pumping regulations.

Mr. Oakley noted that any new systems installed would not have to be pumped for two years.

Mr. Costello related that if the Town fails to provide the facility for this community it is not clear that we can issue hauling permits. Mrs. Sagoff thought that there could be an intermediate solution as initially related by Mr. Gilberti in reopening the honey pots, with an air stripper for the minimal volatile organic contamination. The stripper would cost about ten thousand dollars, and it can be broken down and resold. A new lining would need to be installed in the honey pots. The DEQE requirement that the honey pots be shut down was noted.

Mr. Hunter responded that reopening the honey pots steps on the toes of DEQE. The Greater Lawrence situation seems to be based on DEQE difficulties also, regarding monies for upgrading their plant.

Mrs. Sagoff felt that if the volatile organic compounds could be removed from the septage so that it did not get into the drinking water and industrial septage were outlawed, the honey pots could be viable.

Mrs. Tavernier noted that this would be a clear violation of state law. New lagoons would need to be lined and we would need a Groundwater Discharge Permit and treatment. The cost of a lagoon that would be acceptable to DEQE would be 2.5 million dollars with no state reimbursement. Also, there would be a loss of the quality of life aspect of the future recreation area. Mrs. Tavernier expressed pleasure with and support of the Board of Health concept of a combined treatment plant.

Mr. Gilberti then asked what the Board of Health would be doing.

Mr. Johnson noted some of the aspects of the Upper Blackstone issue. He noted that the pricing will be revised annually. Mr. Emmons related that you contract with them for five years and agree to let them change the price on an annual basis. Mr. Halley related that the real costs were in travel time.

Mr. Costello noted that, unlike NESWC, (trash incinerating facility) this is a short-term contract. Some argument regarding the issue ensued between Messrs Costello and Weeks.

Mr. Gilberti noted that this has to be an approved site by the Board of Health.

Mrs. Tavernier asked about Sudbury/Wayland treatment plant. Mr. Halley stated that they have only 7,000 gallons extra capacity per day.

Mr. Gilberti asked if the pumpers could find a place before September 1. Mr. Halley responded that they could not. They cannot currently find alternative facilities.

Mr. Weeks asked if only emergency pumping jobs could be done for the month of September. Mr. Costello stated that the Board of Health needed routine pumping of grease traps for restaurants.

Mr. Kostro asked about an emergency plan. What can we afford not to do for that period of time, and what can be done to buy some time? Mr. Gilberti stated that maybe Acton could use Sudbury/Wayland.

Mr. Weeks asked if the Board of Health can issue emergency orders to NOT pump. Mr. Johnson related that a moratorium on building permits was not currently applicable but recommended emergency action regarding pumping activities. Banning pumping of commercial sites could cause restaurants to shut down.

Mr. Costello stated that routine maintenance could be deferred for a period of time for septic tanks, but not for grease traps. Per query of Nancy Tavernier, Mr. Costello stated that a grease trap would be about 1,000 gallons on the average.

Mrs. Sagoff noted that while Acton officials are deciding, Upper Blackstone could be filled up.

Mr. Hunter asked what Upper Blackstone is offering in terms of volume. Do they require threshold volumes? Mr. Halley stated that they intend for Acton to bring all their septage to them. It is important to wait a little to find out what is happening with Greater Lawrence.

Mr. Gilberti asked about Board of Health instituting a pumping moratorium and proceeding to find a site for minimum disposal during that period of time required to develop a scheme.

Mrs. Tavernier asked if we knew Upper Blackstone has the capacity for Acton.

Mr. Gilberti asked if Mr. Johnson's letter to the Governor had been read. Mr. Gilberti asked the Board of Health to implement an emergency plan for an immediate solution.

Mr. Costello asked if we could reopen the lagoons, and requested advice from Town Counsel regarding emergency Board of Health powers.

Mr. Gilberti stated that the Board of Health and Board of Selectmen will be meeting often over the next several months to implement a solution. He felt that something would be coming into Town Meeting this spring regarding septage treatment.

Mr. Johnson stated that this Town will be appropriating a major amount of money for the transactions necessary for Upper Blackstone. This will have to be at the Fall Town Meeting.

7:37 p.m. Mr. Gilberti thanked the Board of Health and asked about developing a program. Mrs. Sagoff expressed continued concern regarding grease trap and trouble pumping.

Board of Health, after some discussion in the hallway, with Mr. Roger Woodard listening in to make sure we weren't plotting against the High Street elite, adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Holley  
Carol Holley, Sec'y

Signed and approved,

Daniel Costello  
Daniel Costello, Chairman

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