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Town continues scrutiny on Fields at Sherborn project

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They requested an additional appropriation to receive further services from Nobis Engineering, the firm hired by the town to look at the Fields at Sherborn plans.

The selectmen did approve an amount not to exceed \$7,000 to come from the legal services budget to be supervised by Town Administrator David Williams, the Board of Health and the Conservation Commission. That amount makes the total appropriated so far approximately \$23,000.

Daryl Beardsley, chairwoman of the Board of Health, and Michael Lesser of the Conservation Commission reported on the progress made.

The goal of the hydrogeological services at Nobis, Beardsley said, was to evaluate the “ins and outs of the project” and examine public health and safety issues that the applicant, Trask Development, may not consider.

She added, “There have been some good outcomes through the process we have been going through in terms of the exchange of information with the applicant, the peer reviewer [BETA Group], input from Nobis and input from residents and others.”

She said the project has become complex for the town because of this information exchange process and called it “a moving target” since signing on with Nobis Engineering Nov. 4, 2015.

The deadline for a decision on the permit and various waivers was mid-December, she said, but then due to incorporating plan revisions and changes, the amount of work has increased.

She said Nobis has been asked to present at a Zoning Board of Appeals meeting, an aspect not included in the original budget for the consultant.

Beardsley noted that the possibility exists that the applicant or the peer reviewer may provide further analyses they would ask Nobis to do, but the goal was to wrap up the information.

She briefed the board on the last Board of Health meeting on Feb. 11 in which Nobis presented new findings, and Trask asked for an extension on the March 1 deadline for the permit decision. The other factor is including any new information from this development into the final Nobis report, she said.

Beardsley added, “They requested an opportunity to go back and re-examine the plans, and we don’t know what’s going to come out of that just yet.”

Lesser explained the additional money requested also involved looking at the nitrate and nitrogen levels in the groundwater that may impact the wetlands, as well as evaluating changes that may occur with the project.

On that note, Beardsley said that scrutiny came from the Nobis findings on the project’s data.

Lesser said the deadline is tight as the process has to be “wrapped up, finalized and tied up” in the next week or so to meet the current deadline.

He added, “It is a very tight schedule.”

DeRensis supported the additional funds for the reason that James Vernon, the hydrologist for Nobis, has been “very competent” and “a good choice for the town.” He believed it was important to focus on protecting all residents, in particular those who would be living at the Fields at Sherborn.

He said, “A little bit of money spent now really will pay dividends in the future.”

Selectman Sean Killeen said the timing of the Board of Health getting information has been difficult as the peer reviewer and Nobis do not always get information right away for analysis.

He said, “Hopefully, at the end of this, once this is all over, we’ll get a chance to think about this process before another 40B kicks off ... because we’re running behind, and we’re spending money to run behind.”

He noted the dates and money needed for evaluation have been “a moving target.”

Calling it a “tricky balance” of regulatory deadlines and procedures, Lesser said, “We agree with you. We have to figure out better ways to do it, but we don’t have a lot of control sometimes.”



He said he has learned about what they would be looking for upfront in a future project application.

Beardsley said, "I agree with Sean that we have to capture all those lessons learned."

Opioid abuse

In other business, at the Feb. 4 meeting of the Board of Selectmen, the issue of opioid abuse was discussed with the selectmen hearing from the Sherborn Police about the programs in town to prevent and address the issue.

One component of the conversation was the proposal to put an article on the 2016 Annual Town Meeting warrant to create a "Combating Opioid Abuse Committee" to look at the issue.

DeRensis, who prompted the article and discussion, provided an update.

He said, "The purpose of bringing it up was to see where we are and what can we do to add to it: to build upon where we are."

DeRensis added that he believed there is a need for a committee to talk about opioids.

He also reported that Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito has asked Sean Cronin of the Department of Revenue to put together a specific program to fight opioid abuse that ties into the approximately 170-member community compact program.

As Sherborn is a community compact town, he said this option, once it is "up and running," applies to them.

DeRensis noted he has talked to the Board of Health informally, and there is "some interest" to further discuss their role in addressing the issue for different community members.

However, he believed that Sherborn is not ready to consider a committee and to appropriate money to form such a committee. He added it needed to be "thought through some more."

DeRensis added, "I do want to see what the community compact comes up with, and I do want to see what the Board of Health might be willing to do."