

An Update on the Marion Cross School's Septic System Replacement

March 13, 2020

Recently, the School Board has heard from several community members asking for an update on the assessment of the Marion Cross School's septic system, the progress on its replacement, and a timeline.

I apologize if our communications have not been distributed widely enough. The School Board and District administration have included updates on our progress at most School Board meetings over the past year-and-a-half and it will be a topic on our agenda for every meeting until a resolution is presented for a warrant article, hopefully at the next Town Meeting. If you are interested in the discussions, you can review the minutes of each meeting through [BoardDocs](#), or watch the meetings on [CATV](#).

Though the School Board had initially hoped to present the town with an article at our recent Town Meeting, we realized early in the fall that we would not be able to do so. We were not far enough along in our testing of the current system, nor in our discussions with the Town of Hartford (we presented to their Selectboard in late September), which has determined that we need to work with them to do a significant amount of testing of their system to determine its capacity to accept our request.

To provide a quick background on the progress of our review, we began discussing our options for replacement in August of 2018 and have added some options since then. The options from the start were to: 1) replace where the system currently is; 2) replace with a new system on the Peisch property (adjacent to the school and abutting the Milton Frye Nature Area); and 3) to connect to the Hartford Wastewater System. Along the way, we have considered other options in case some of these original three were deemed not feasible. In fact, the Peisch property is no longer deemed feasible, due to soil constraints. One option we have considered, but don't consider feasible, at this time, is a connection to Hanover's Wastewater System. More recently, due to a recommendation from a Norwich community member, we have begun to look into the possibility of installing an eco-machine at Dresden Fields (a similar example is installed at the Sharon Rest Area). This, of course, would require the wastewater to be pumped from MCS to the Dresden Fields and would require an agreement with the Dresden School District. This option is in the very early stages of review and its likely costs would probably require that there be other partners in its use, similar to our approach with the option to connect to the Hartford Wastewater System and our reason for talks to partner with King Arthur Flour, the Coop/Car Store, and Foggs/Norwich Commerce Park.

There have been some questions about the MCS septic system and whether it should be specifically referenced in the Town Plan. The reason that it is not specifically referenced is because it is a School District issue. If the determination were made to replace the system where it currently is on the Green, the Town/Selectboard would not be involved at all. If the school board determined that the best option would be a connection to Hartford's system, and

Hartford approved, the school board would work with the town/Selectboard on approval for rights of way for the connection, but the school district would work to gain approval for the funding. There would likely also be grant opportunities to pursue with the town and the businesses with which we've connected for potential partnerships (King Arthur, the Coop/Car Store, Foggs). The same could be said for a potential eco-machine at the Dresden Fields, though the Dresden School District would also play a role (and, again, this potential option is in the very early stages of review). A status report was provided to the Selectboard at their October 9th meeting and more will be provided in the near future.

As you likely know, the School District embarked on a series of measures in the late fall to try to avoid issues that we have realized in the past during cold weather months. Nearly half of the Green was shut down to keep foot traffic off of the leach field and we began dosing the septic system at different rates and intervals. Unfortunately, in the past couple of weeks, we began to see the reemergence of similar cold weather issues and, as a result, closed down the entire Green to foot traffic.

The week of March 9th we began testing of the monitoring wells that were put in place last year and will continue tests, as the water table is high, over the course of the next three months. We also will continue talks regarding our options with the Town of Hartford, a potential eco-machine, and with potential partners (King Arthur Flour, the Car Store/Coop, and Foggs). As mentioned earlier, updates on our progress will be reported out at every school board meeting until we arrive at a resolution.

Thank you again for your support and patience. The process can be frustratingly slow, but we are doing our best to review all possible options to come to the best solution for the long-term. If you have additional questions, or concerns, please do contact me, or the SAU70 office.

Regards,
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