

SOUTH ALBURGH FIRE DISTRICT NO. 2
REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, February 22, 2022 at 6:30 PM

Present: Prudential Committee Members John Fitzgerald, Alton Brusco, Tony Speranza via phone
Admin. Assistant Danielle James Choiniere
Treasurer Richard Ernst

Guests: Tom Jacobsen via phone, Charles Kelly, Brian Bessette, Michele Kelly, Richard Riani

Meeting was called to order at 6:33 PM by Chair John Fitzgerald.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

Tony Speranza had Phase II tidbits to put under that heading.

MINUTES

John Fitzgerald motioned to approve December's minutes and January's informational meeting. Alton Brusco seconded, all in favor. So approved (approved later in the meeting but keep here for overall consistency).

VISITOR INPUT

Charles Kelly and Brian Bessette worked on a slide show they presented to the select board prior. It detailed how earlier history had Route 129 as an earlier project goal and how they felt it was discarded for a different course without due cause, and for commercial justifications (see attachment to these minutes for the slides in their entirety). They wanted to see a Stop Work Order on current Phase II.

Brian Bessette also presented an engineering chart copy for the board to assess on what he feels was a cost discrepancy in the two proposed phase routes.

Tony Speranza was disappointed about what he felt were facts turned around and there was no way to stop current Phase II without killing the entire project.

Richard Riani and Michele Kelly added there are more full-time users on Route 129 than there were, lots of infrastructure money out there, and concern the Middle Road farm would interfere with residential consumption. They didn't want negativity; just hope they'd someday have good water.

The board reiterated they want everyone to have good water and have been volunteering for years to help serve the greatest number of residents at the best cost.

Tony Speranza added private funding or SEARCH grants may help Route 2 users to get engineering advice without costing them money.

John Fitzgerald closed with an offer to help answer any questions anyone has after this meeting, or any time.

TREASURER'S WARRANT & REPORT

Alton Brusco motioned to approve Treasurer's Report. John Fitzgerald seconded, all in favor. So approved. John Fitzgerald motioned to pay the following bills from both the operating and project accounts. Alton Brusco seconded, all in favor. So approved. The board also wanted to investigate getting reimbursed from their grant money.

\$360.66 Admin Assistant's paycheck

\$25 to Endyne for water testing

\$2,648.21 to EJ Prescott for 8 new meters and associated parts

\$245 to VT Rural Water for annual membership dues

\$55.28 in mileage to Danielle James Choiniere from 2021

\$7,815.30 DuBois and King for final design work et al

PHASE II UPDATES

A meeting with engineer Galen Hagen had to be rescheduled for Wednesday, March 2 @ 6:30 PM on Zoom. There was also mention of meeting with the town select board. Attorney easement input hasn't been received yet.

Tony and Danielle linked a 2018 FAQ Memorandum from engineers on the district's website.

Alburgh resident Tom Jacobsen helped provide input on ROW topics in the Point of Tongue area.

The board also must work on a suggested vendor list for new hookups and see if the water ordinance needed updating.

The board worked on completing some numbers so that a grant application could be submitted to the DWSRF. The grant application was originally brought to the board's attention by Charles Kelly and Brian Besette of Route 129.

WATER OR OPERATIONS ISSUES/ CORRESPONDANCE/ MISC

Danielle presented copies of a letter received from a Poor Farm Road resident who was building a new home and wanted to make sure the proposed water line didn't adversely affect his utility lines.

ADJOURN

John Fitzgerald motioned to adjourn at 8:55 PM. Richard Ernst seconded, all in favor. So adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Danielle James Choiniere

These minutes are draft only, not slated for approval until the next board meeting in March.

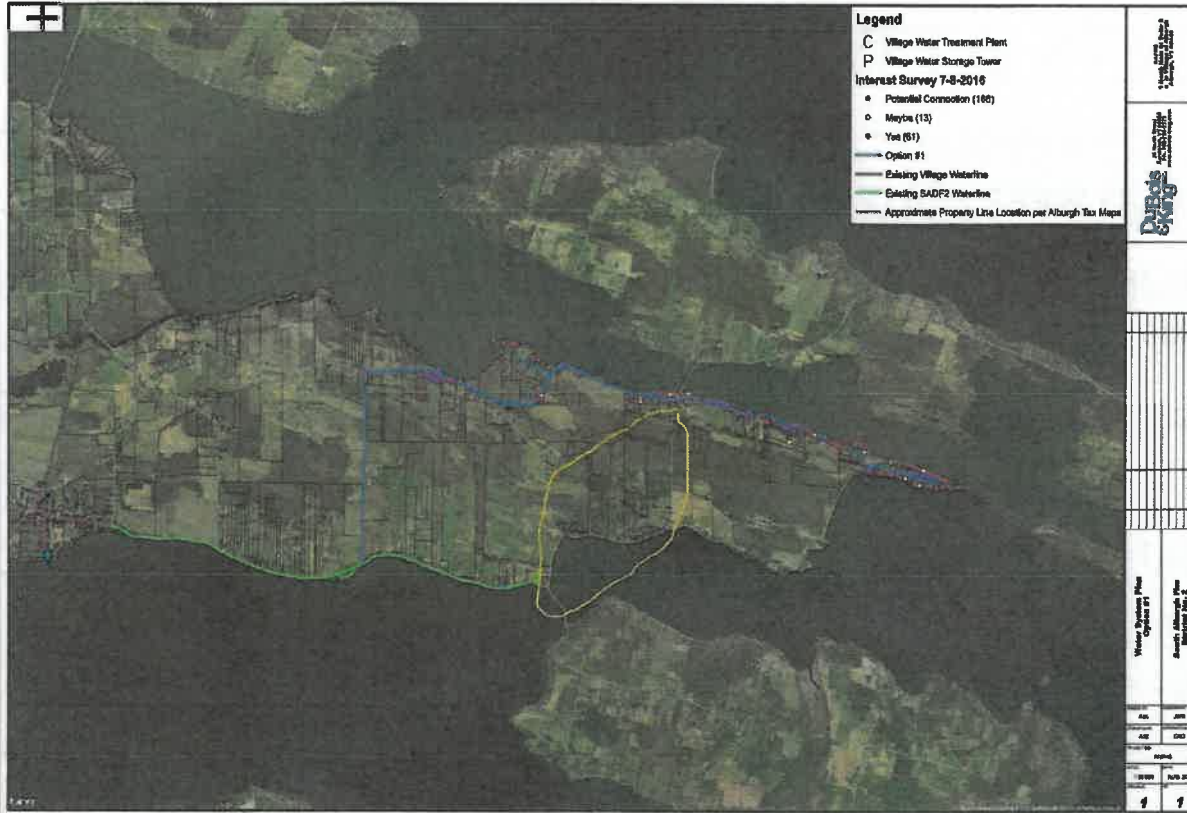
RESIDENTS OF THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF SAFD2 HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED FROM PHASE 2

ADDENDUM ACTIONS BY SAFD#2 REGARDING TOWN WATER
EXPANSION PROJECT, PHASE 2 LEAVE RESIDENTS IN THE SOUTHWEST
CORNER LEFT OUT AND WITH CONCERNS FOR THEIR FUTURE SAFE
DRINKING WATER SOURCE

ORIGINALLY SAFD#2 PHASE 2 WATER EXPANSION PLAN INCLUDED HOMES ON RT.129 AND THE DISTRICT'S SOUTHWEST CORNER

- THE ORIGINAL 2004 PLAN FOR SAFD#2 DEFINED MAP BOUNDARIES WHICH INCLUDED A SOUTHWEST CORNER FOLLOWING RT. 129.
- AT THAT TIME 60 RESIDENTS ALONG RT. 129 EXPRESSED INTEREST AND SOME SIGNED ON (REF. J. HIGGIN'S EMAIL 3/3/2012).
- A DECADE LATER AFTER PHASE 1 WAS COMPLETED IN 2014, SOUTHWEST RESIDENTS STILL BELIEVED THEY WERE NEXT AND A PART OF PHASE 2.
- NOT UNTIL 2018 DID THE SAFD#2 PUBLIC NEWS LETTER INDICATE THAT PHASE 2 HAD BEEN CHANGED AND WAS "A DONE DEAL".

THE SOUTHWEST AREA OF THE WATER DISTRICT LEFT OUT OF PHASE 2



C. Kelly and B. Bessett

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RESIDENTS ATTENDED SAFD#2 MEETINGS

- A GROUP OF RT. 129 RESIDENTS ATTENDED AN SAFD#2 MEETING ON OR AFTER OCTOBER 2011 AND WERE TOLD WE WERE IN PHASE 2.
- E-MAIL CORRESPONDENCE WITH COMMISSIONER JUDY HIGGINS IN MARCH 2012 AGAIN ASSURED US WE WERE IN PHASE 2.
- THE 2018 SAFD#2 NEWS LETTER TALKS OF A D&K ENGINEERING FINAL DESIGN ADDENDUM 8/31/2018 DECLARING AN OPTION CHANGE TO A MIDDLE RD. ROUTE. ACTUAL COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS WAS NOT PROVIDED.
- IN MAY 2019 THE SAFD#2'S PUBLIC NEWS LETTER DECLARED THAT THE PHASE 2 ROUTE WAS CHANGED VIA OPTION 1 TO A MIDDLE RD. CROSSING OF THE PENINSULA TO RT. 2 THUS ELIMINATING THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF THE DISTRICT.

OPTION 1 OF PHASE 2 VIOLATES THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE SAFD2

- THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE SAFD2 SINCE 2004 STATES THE “PURPOSE IS TO BRING SAFE DRINKING WATER TO THE RESIDENTS OF SOUTH ALBURGH”.
- THE 2018 ADDENDUM OPTION 1 CHANGE TO THE PHASE 2 PLAN IS BRINGING WATER TO SOUTHEAST RESIDENTS, BUT ALSO, PURPOSELY TO NON-RESIDENT CORPORATIONS HEADQUARTERED IN BURLINGTON, VT.
- CORPORATE OFFICERS DO NOT LIVE IN ALBURGH AND THEREFORE FAIL THE SAFD2 CHARTER AND MISSION STATEMENT TEST.
- VOTERS APPROVED THE \$6.9M BOND FOR RESIDENT USE NOT NON-RESIDENT CORPORATION USE.

MAJOR CHANGE TO SAFD#2 PHASE 2 WITHOUT SPECIAL MEETING

- THE SAFD#2 MAY 2019 YEARLY NEWS LETTER GAVE NOTICE OF A MAJOR ROUTE CHANGE FOR PHASE 2. THIS IS OF CONCERN ON SEVERAL FRONTS:

1. SAFD#2 MINUTES OF MEETING INDICATE AN INTEREST IN PROVIDING POTABLE WATER SUPPLY FOR COMMERCIAL NON-RESIDENT USE RATHER THAN SOUTHWEST RESIDENTIAL USE. THE NUMBER OF RESIDENTIAL USERS IN THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF THE DISTRICT OUTNUMBER MIDDLE ROAD USERS BY FAR.
2. THE ORIGINAL PHELPS ENGINEERING PLAN APPROVED BY REFERENDUM HAD A WARNED PUBLIC MEETING WITH TAX PAYER APPROVAL WHICH THEN PASSED A \$6.9M BOND. THE APPROVED BOND WAS TO SUPPLY SAFD2 WATER TO ALL OF THE DISTRICT. THE AMENDED D&K PLAN DID NOT HAVE A WARNED PUBLIC MEETING. THE SAFD2 SAID ON MAY 2019 THE MIDDLE RD. ROUTE WAS FIRM (REF. NEWS LETTER SAME DATE) .
3. THIS CHANGE WAS NOT MINOR. THE WHOLE SOUTHWEST OF THE DISTRICT WAS ELIMINATED. THE CHANGE WAS SIGNIFICANT AS DESCRIBED IN THE AMENDED ENGINEERING PLAN WHICH REVISES BOTH THE WATERLINE ROUTE, ADDS INCREASED MILES OF PIPE INSTALLATION AND PROVIDED ONLY A ROM COST ESTIMATE.
4. THIS CHANGED PLAN BENEFITS MOSTLY COMMERCIAL CORPORATIONS THAT HAVE NO ALBURGH OWNER RESIDENCY.

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CONCLUSIONS

- RESIDENTS IN THE SAFD2 SOUTHWEST CORNER HAVE BEEN BYPASSED AND LEFT BEHIND IN ANY FORESEEABLE WATER EXPANSION PLANS.
- AS RECENTLY AS JAN.18, 2022 THE SAFD2 STATED THAT THE SOUTHWEST CORNER TERRAIN WAS TOO DIFFICULT, “...*IN ADDITION TO OTHER FACTORS LIKE A WETLAND CROSSING, LARGE HILL, REDUCED SURVEY RESPONSES, LEDGE, ETC. MADE 129 LESS FAVORABLE.*”
- THESE TERRAIN “*FACTORS*” HAVEN’T CHANGED IN MILLIONS OF YEARS AND WON’T CHANGE IN PHASE 3 OR PHASE 33. TERRAIN IS NOT AN EXCUSE FOR IGNORING THE SOUTHWEST OF THE DISTRICT. THE 2016 SURVEY WAS FLAWED IN THE MAIL OUT PROCESS.
- THE FINANCIAL ANALYSIS COMPARISON BETWEEN THE ORIGINAL PLAN AND THE AMENDED PLAN NEEDS SCRUTINY. THERE IS A REAL LIKELIHOOD THE VILLAGE WATER TREATMENT PLANT WILL NEED COSTLY UPGRADES TO HANDLE PHASE 2 WITH INCREASED DEMAND FROM CORPORATE EXPANSION.
- OTHER MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES BOTH FOR AND AGAINST THE CHANGE IN PLAN HAVE NOT BEEN CLEARLY DISSEMINATED.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

- WAS IT AN OVERSITE TO NOT TO HAVE A WARNED MEETING WITH THE EXPRESSED PURPOSE OF EXPLAINING TO THE VOTERS THE CHANGED DESIGN AND COST IMPACT TO THE SAFD#2 WATER EXPANSION PLAN, PHASE 2?
- WHY IS A CHANGE IN DIRECTION MADE FOR THE BENEFIT OF NON-RESIDENT CORPORATIONS AT THE EXPENSE OF TAXPAYING RESIDENTS?
- DO CURRENT SAFD#2 COMMISSIONERS HAVE PLANS TO EVEN REMAIN ON THE COMMITTEE BEYOND THE COMPLETION OF PHASE 2 AND SUPPORT A THUS FAR UNPLANNED PHASE 3?
- IF A RT. 129 TRAVERSE IS TOO DIFFICULT NOW, HOW WILL DOING IT LATER CHANGE ANYTHING?
- IS IT NOT UNJUST TO CONTINUE TO COLLECT A SAFD#2 TAX WHILE WE WAIT ANOTHER ????? YEARS?
- WHY WAS \$50,000 OF TAXPAYER MONEY SPENT TO DESIGN A ROUTE CHANGE WITHOUT FIRST TESTING ALLOWANCE BY APPROVED BOND DEFINITION?

C. Kelly and B. Bessette

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WE REQUEST A STOP WORK ORDER ON PHASE 2

UNTIL THE AMENDED PHASE 2 WATER EXPANSION PLAN CAN BE INVESTIGATED AND JUSTIFIED FOR ELIMINATING THE RESIDENTS OF THE SOUTHWEST OF THE SAFD2 DISTRICT WHEN INITIALLY THE SOUTHWEST HAD BEEN INCLUDED AND PROMISED IN THE 2004 \$6.9M BOND VOTER APPROVED PLAN.

