

Water is a main concern at focus group meeting

by Patricia Gay

pgay@theWestonForum.com

Westonites care about water.

The subject was much discussed at a focus group meeting on natural resources held Wednesday, March 25.

The hearing was part of the scoping process for the upcoming Plan of Conservation and Development, and was moderated by Dan Gilbert and Ridge Young of the Planning and Zoning Commission, and Tom

Failla of the Conservation Commission.

"We are here tonight to discuss how Weston's resources need to be managed and to take public input," said Dr. Gilbert.

He said the town's natural resources have to be managed effectively as an integrated system of streams, rivers, aquifers, trees and shrubs.

"The question is how can we most effectively manage them to assure they support Weston's ongoing develop-

ment," Dr. Gilbert said.

In a discussion of potable water, Dr. Gilbert said one thing to consider is if the town came up short on water and didn't have enough, what would it mean, and would the town have to bring in public water?

The town currently relies on well water for drinking, and individual septic systems for waste disposal. The town does not have piped in water or sewer systems.

Sewers

In a discussion of septic systems versus sewers, Bob Turner said sewers and water systems would likely bring in industry and would change the character of the town. "If you are a developer you would like to see sewers, but as a resident who moved here for the rural character, it would change things for you," Mr. Turner said.

Ellen Strauss mentioned

a federally mandated sewer avoidance program that was instituted in town so that Weston should not ever have sewers.

"If people don't like it they can leave the same way they came. We don't want or need [sewer] systems," she said.

Mr. Young asked if Ms. Strauss could further explain the federally mandated sewer avoidance plan, but she did not know the history or have details. "I just know what I was told about it a long time ago," she said.

Selectman Gayle Weinstein said natural resources are a top priority to protect the public welfare.

"Before there is any kind of development, we need to assess what it will do to the town's natural resources," she said.

Alternatives

Corey Attra, chairman of the Conservation Commission,

said the committee should keep in mind that there is new technology with viable alternatives to sewers.

He said in the course of his work, he has seen on-site wastewater treatment plants that are self-contained and are used by developers as alternatives to running sewer lines.

"I've seen some sewer treatment plants that have 30 homes on one system," Mr. Attra said.

Dr. Failla asked what kind of soils are needed for the operation of the plants. Mr. Attra said natural granular soils.

He asked the committee to do more research into sewage treatment plants and take a proactive approach. "If the town does not allow for the units to go somewhere in particular, they could go be put all around," he said.

Dr. Gilbert asked if these systems were efficient in all types of weather.

Mr. Attra said they can work in different weather but are expensive to operate. He said the sewage treatment plants can be used for larger developments such as congregate or affordable housing, which in the past would have required sewers.

Katie Gregory, a member of P&Z, said the committee will need to evaluate the pros and cons of sewage treatment plants.

"Plan for it. Don't leave it unplanned, so the risk can be managed," Mr. Attra said.

Concern was also expressed about pollution, runoff, stone walls, open space and acreage restrictions.

The next focus group meeting will discuss residential and commercial development, community facilities, and town infrastructure.

It will be held Thursday, April 30, at 7:30 p.m. at the library.

Kiwanis food drive happening Sunday

To support the heavy cost is a contribution of \$5 demands the Weston Food Pantry is experiencing, the schoolers free), and \$20 for a