

Reply to Phil Wilson's comments on my document dated February 15, 2018.

One of the wonderful aspects about US democracy is that we can all be heard and our views considered. With that in mind, and mindful that no good deed or reply will go unpunished let me respond to Phil's comments:

1. Phil's reply has two prongs while my document and the accompanying presentation contained many more nuances.
2. To correct any apparent misconception that has crept into Phil's response, my recommendation was that if the Committee determined that it was in the town's interest to begin the development of a sewer line for the town of North Hampton then there were a number of options worthy of consideration:
  - (a) A tie with Hampton assuming willingness
  - (b) Establishing a 'package' sewer plant serving a limited portion of the town where business development may take place, or even
  - (c) Approaching the town of Stratham about joining a proposed connection with Exeter. (Mentioned during the accompanying verbal presentation).
3. At no time did I prejudge the desirability of high density development in North Hampton.
4. My brief was to examine the possibility of establishing waste water facilities in the town of North Hampton, as a condition for high density development.
5. Absent an adequate investigation of what infrastructure would attract businesses to the town and a better understanding what kind of business activity we have in mind, it may be premature for both Phil and myself to pass judgement on the matter.
6. The EDC finding cited by Phil that "additional retail development in North Hampton -- except, perhaps, small, local businesses -- is not likely" is I believe predicated on the notion that there is no change in infrastructure provision and so once again may represent only a partial response.
7. Conjecturing over the type of business that might consider making North Hampton its home is premature. However we can presumably agree that absent infrastructure no such possibility exists.
8. Phil's observations over the impact of higher density development in the Atlantic Ave, route 1 intersection ( Heartland) concerning potential increase in traffic and transformation of the rural character of the town may well be prescient, however one might hazard a guess that even high density residential development, predicated on sewer infrastructure,while placing an additional burden on education and limited municipal services will have a multiplier effect from the additional residents in the town who will perhaps be inclined to spend their hard earned dollars in currently empty North Hampton stores, thereby enriching other North Hampton residents and so on.
9. As an economist I wholeheartedly support the metering of municipal water and waste water services on the basis that the cost causer should pay according to his/her usage. However we are not there yet or perhaps ever, and it is perhaps premature to discuss the pros and cons of metered service vs recovery from all taxpayers. We are still at the stage of examining the options for further development in the 'Heartland' of North Hampton.

10. Phil has been kind enough to quote me as follows:” If North Hampton seeks Hampton’s assent to connect with their sewer system, North Hampton "can sweeten the deal" by offering to help pay for necessary upgrades to the system.” I am not aware that any municipality in the country would offer to connect without cost. There is no such thing as a free ride! In return for a sewer connection to the Hampton waste water facility , North Hampton would be able to negotiate terms or begin a negotiation perhaps with Exeter and join the Stratham –Exeter proposed project.
11. However in discussion with the Hampton Water works officials and the State Dept. of Environmental Services I am assured that the Hampton plant can meet its current treatment needs even in the three high volume summer months. I would recommend verifying Phil’s assertion that the Hampton system is presently overtaxed.
12. I concur with Phil that my estimates for construction of a ‘package’ plant are understated; a fact that I took pains to make clear during the presentation. I added that the permitting process is demanding and that back up capability requirements by the State may further raise the costs. However both Phil and I have not carried out a full feasibility study, whereas my numbers are based on the collective wisdom of waster /water engineers from the largest city in New Hampshire, Manchester.
13. Where I am at odds with Phil is over his conclusion that: “The disadvantages of high-density development, even on a two miles-long strip of Route 1, far outweigh the benefits to the residents of the Town.” Absent feasibility studies and discussions with neighboring communities to explore the options of link up to Hampton or Exeter, or package plant construction, the conclusion is at best premature.
14. I am accused by Phil of not having mentioned one of the recommendations of the Underwood study, namely that “North Hampton can and should implement a rigorous septic system testing and maintenance program to ensure that septic system failures do not pose a threat to drinking water supplies in town.” My recollection is that Underwood furnished eight recommendations ( see page 3 of the report) of which the abovementioned is certainly one, however this recommendation was made in 1984 and I felt sure that the town had already moved forward with implementing the obvious and it was not worthy or repetition.( Two of the other recommendations seek long term agreements with the town of Hampton)
15. Phil points out quite correctly that a “two-miles-long sewer system on Route 1 will not protect aquifers from contamination in the vast majority of the Town.” Agreed, but my intent in suggesting an option for the “heartland “of North Hampton was predicated on the desirability to attract businesses and amenities to that small part of the town and help it grow into a desirable center and meeting place for the residents of the town, if that is the wish of its residents.
16. Citing the Underwood study, Phil points out that “The lowest cost way to deal with septage in a town like North Hampton is with septic systems, and properly maintained septic systems also conserve water resources.” But he has not made clear that Underwood stated that this was at best a short run solution, a finger in the dyke of contamination, and that the sooner the town moved forward with the development of its own infrastructure, the better, thereby avoiding the kind of catastrophe that faced North Conway where it was forced to link up with a neighboring system under critical conditions.

17. My recommendation is to determine first whether the town wishes to further develop the 'Heartland' area of the town or not. If not, then the issue of a sewer line is moot until the problem faces us squarely in the face. If we wish to consider further Heartland development then we need to begin the discussion of options as outlined in my report. Fortunately, the town would not be alone in this endeavor as I have pointed out that numerous bodies/agencies are willing and have offered to provide their knowledge and support to help us better define the challenge. Phil's reply has made it abundantly clear that the town needs to commence/resume a dialogue around the future infrastructure that it will furnish for its residents.
18. Our choice is either to kick the can down the road or plan for future development.