

IN OTHER BUSINESS

NEWS FROM HARVARD'S BOARDS

Board of Health**Presby scores**

The Woods of West Bare Hill Road have reconsidered their options for a necessary septic upgrade, and have chosen the Presby system. While still applying for variances to Title 5, Dan Wolfe of Ross Associates told the Board of Health at its Jan. 9 meeting that his clients chose Presby because it would require less fill. In 15 minutes, and with the enthusiastic support of board member Lorin Johnson, a resident of Still River, he received approval for the installation of a Presby system.

Nashoba Associated Boards of Health sanitarian Ira Grossman noted that this was the first of several Presby systems that would be discussed this night. Emphasizing that the state's language says that the board "may" approve such a system, he said that such applications "will come up over and over again, whether for the Presby or the Microfast system."

Both are innovative technologies. "The board's goal is full compliance through the local upgrade process, but if you can make the [mandated] 4-foot offset, you should go for it," Grossman said. The Presby is designed for a 2-foot offset, particularly suitable in cases of hardship due to topography or size of lot.

Johnson asked if there is a difference in the burden to the homeowner. "The aesthetics," answered Wolfe, [and whether] there's another big mound popping up on the landscape." He also said that Presby represented cost savings because less fill is required. "Fill is what drives up the cost."

"The environmental issue," continued Wolfe, also exists. "You can stay out of the buffer zone with fill."

Explaining that a number of innovative technologies have come down the pike

since 1995, Wolfe said that the board had asked him "in a tight situation" to try an innovative technology. "My answer is that [I try to] keep a mechanical device out of the system that can break," and because of the increased monitoring needed, "I've shied away" from it.

But, he said, after a presentation by Presby's owner David Presby, he was very impressed. "There's no mechanical aspect to this system. It's fairly maintenance free," Wolfe said.

While the state's goal for a homeowner is full compliance with Title 5, Presby falls under the next category of "maximum feasible compliance."

Grossman responded that the advantage of an innovative technology is that "it is usually used on a very tight lot, where there are wetlands [and issues] of square footage."

"The homeowner is trying to do something here," Johnson said. "We need to think about the people who want to live here. This plan is within permission to do so."

Johnson explained that he had been to two Presby seminars, and is certified in Vermont where the systems first began. "This is a good place to make that stand. I weigh in on the side of Presby to preserve the land."

Presby scores again

Wolfe also sought and obtained local upgrade approval with variances for Harry Park, who lives at Massachusetts Avenue and Pond Road. Approval is contingent on approval from Grossman on the location of the pump chamber.

Seeking to sell his house, Park had told Wolfe that he did not like the "large, landscape feature" of his neighbor, and prefers the Presby system. In addition, the tree line will keep the system out of sight at the back of the

property. The mound is expected to be only 4 feet high with the 2-foot offset.

Similar to the situation of the Weiners, variances being

sought are for reduced groundwater offset of 2 feet (versus the normal 4 feet) and reduced perc rate. However, the Park property has wells in the vicinity, less than the required 100 feet.

Grossman noted, "This is a good case of limited space and well offsets." He voiced concern, however, that the pump chamber and cover are below water level. Wolfe explained that the location is here because the force main can freeze if the pump chamber isn't located in a lower area. A compromise was reached, as Wolfe agreed to adjust the location if he can seal up a riser to insulate it, a measure that requires more attention. Grossman said, "It is troubling to maintain a tight seal - certain materials have a high rate of failure."

Johnson reacted, saying, "I don't want to incur any extra cost for him if we can avoid it."

A tree saved by Presby

Representing clients Frank and Alice Herne of Still River Road, Nick Pauling of Goldsmith, Prest & Ringwall asked for, and obtained, local upgrade approval that will permit his clients to both install a new Presby system and sell their property.

Pauling explained why some deviation in system location had occurred since the Presby plan was approved at the Board's Nov. 28 meeting. Laying out a "working sketch" of the new plans, he showed where the dosing chamber will now be less than 4 feet from the property line, rather than the required 10 feet.

Asked why the change had occurred, Pauling said his "best guess" was to preserve a 16-foot spruce tree in the front yard. All abutters had been duly notified of the meeting's topic that night, and no one spoke up.

He reminded the members that the Hernes' neighbors, the Spragues, have told them that they will not continue the verbal arrangement between them for an easement with any new buyers (the Hernes' leachfield is on the Spragues' property).

Presby's three-minute approval

Saying that his client Dewey Brown had received "an Ira love letter" in October, Wolfe made his third appearance of the evening to get approval for yet another Presby system with variances, also on Still River Road. "An Ira love letter" is a euphemism for notification by the board that it is aware of a failed septic system.

"These people are just thrilled there's a solution. This was a ticking time bomb," said Wolfe. "This family couldn't deal with a tight tank." He said his clients didn't want to add "costly, unsightly [retaining] walls," but did wish to decommission a well and drill a new one.

NABH sanitarian Ira Grossman acknowledged that there "is essentially no room" on the property for a traditional system.

Presby out of the ballpark

The Spragues of Still River Road in the midst of a septic upgrade installation, found what every homeowner dreads — ledge in the leaching area. Sanitarian Ira Grossman reported that septic design firm Goldsmith, Prest & Ringwall is seeking to switch to the Presby system, which if used, will result in a 40 percent reduction in the leaching area.

Unfortunately, Grossman said, according to Title 5, should the homeowner encounter conditions occur during installation other than what are approved (ledge, for example), new approvals are needed.

Member Lorin Johnson was fast to react. "Let's get 'em going before the ground freezes up."