

**Mount Holly Special Select Board Meeting
December 27, 2019
Minutes**

Present: Select Board: Mark Turco (chair), Ron Tarbell, Jennifer Matthews

Town Officials: David Johnson, Clinton Woolley

Members of Public: Brian Buffum (Chief, Mount Holly Volunteer Fire Department), Morgan Collins, Craig Hutt Vater (Principal, Mount Holly School), Craig Jewett (Otter Creek Engineering), Annette Lynch, Joe McDonald, Candace Neary, Don Richardson, Rhonda Rivers, Andrew L. Salner, Patricia M. Salner, Richard Spiese (VT Department of Environmental Conservation), Kelly Tarbell, Ray Tarbell, David Venter

1. **Call to Order** by chair Mark Turco at 3:00 p.m.

All stood for the **Pledge of Allegiance**.

2. **Consideration of any changes and/or additions to the agenda** – None were necessary.

3 & 4. PFAS Contamination, Mount Holly School Well Water, Information Session & Discussion with Question & Answer Period – Mark Turco introduced Richard Spiese from the VT Department of Environmental Conservation, Waste Management & Prevention Division. Mr. Spiese noted he had

visited Mount Holly many years ago to help with the underground tank removal and kerosene leak at the Mount Holly General Store. He was also the individual sent from the State to do the initial testing in North Bennington which led to the discovery of wide-spread PFOA contamination.

Mr. Spiese explained that the molecules in PFAS are remarkable from a scientific perspective in that they are tightly bound and difficult to break apart. They get into the water and spread while repelling water. These chemicals are found in 1000s of products from food wraps to water-repellant clothing to floor wax and cleaning chemicals to fire-fighting foam. They are also found in our bodies, taking two-to-four years to eliminate. Drinking contaminated water will raise the numbers of PFAS in the body.

Mr. Spiese explained that the VT Drinking Water Standard for PFAS is 20 ng/l; the federal standard is 70 ng/l. The Mount Holly School tested at 323 ng/l. Other schools in the area, including Thetford Academy, Killington Mountain School, and Grafton Elementary School, have also tested above the guidelines. He stated that if the school's well is contaminated, it has probably been so for decades. The source of the PFAS contamination may be from fire-fighting foam or the school's septic tank or some form of soil contamination. There is no way to know when the contamination began, but it has probably been there for some time. It may take months (or more) to pinpoint the source of the contamination.

Within the next week, Mr. Spiese stated his department will start contacting homeowners in the area to take water samples. The two streams on either side of the school property should serve to contain the contamination with no further migration. Homeowners who may want to test for PFAS on their own should document all their time and costs in the investigation of the contamination. Private testing costs \$200-300 per sample.

Mr. Spiese recommended that the school and Mount Holly Volunteer Fire Department talk with their insurers about coverage for water sampling and site clean-up. Once the source of the contamination is determined, the responsible party for that contamination is responsible for all contamination remediation costs, including water sampling, water treatment, and site management and clean-up. These costs can run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. State funds, loans, and/or forgiveness of costs involved with clean-up may be possibilities.

Mr. Spiese said that through interviews with the parties involved and others, his department will put the pieces together and connect the dots to identify the source of the contamination.

Mr. Spiese noted that PFAS are found nation-wide as well as in Europe, Australia and other countries. DuPont and 3M are the main manufacturers of the chemicals. The six New England states are currently working together to identify the best and safest chemicals for use in cleaning our schools. Craig Jewett from Otter Creek Engineering is working with the Mount Holly School. He explained that the State has a response plan that must be followed in incidents of contamination with cost effectiveness as part of the best solution. He stated that solutions to contaminated drinking water might be: a) consolidated water systems; b) drilling a new source; or, c) a treatment system, which is probably the cheapest and quickest remedy. At the Mount Holly School, the cost for a dual granular activated carbon filter system would run \$25-30,000. Mr. Spiese said information about water testing, the process, and the clean-up will be readily available and shared town-wide.

5. **Adjourn** – Ron Tarbell made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:10 pm, seconded by Mark Turco, unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted: Jennifer Matthews

Minutes Approved: 1.14.2020