



**Meeting Summary**  
**LGPC Ad-Hoc Septic Systems Committee (via teleconference)**  
**July 1, 2021 2PM**

**Attendees:**

The Committee:

Ken Parker Committee Chair, LGPC  
Dave Floyd, LGPC  
Bill Mason, LGPC  
Cathy LaBombard, LGPC  
Joe Stanek, LGPC

Advisors to the Committee

Tom Snow, PE NYSDEC - NYC Watershed Program  
Kevin Kenyon, PE NYSDOH  
Tom Jarrett, PE  
Susan Wilson, Deputy Supervisor, Town of Bolton  
Ethan Gaddy, AICP, Warren County Planning Department  
Walt Lender Executive Vice President, LGA  
Dan Barusch, Town/Village of Lake George  
Chris Navitsky, PE, The LG Waterkeeper  
Kathy Muncil, CEO, Fort William Henry Corp.

LGPC Staff

Dave Wick, Executive Director, LGPC  
Jason Kokkinos, LGPC  
Justin Luyk, LGPC

Assistance from:

Chris Round, AICP, The Chazen Companies  
Sean Doty PE, The Chazen Companies

Members of the Public also in attendance on Zoom teleconference

### ***Meeting Discussion Summary:***

- Introductions
- Ken Parker introduced the mission of the ad hoc committee
  1. Understand population of septic systems in watershed
  2. Understand systems negative impacts on water quality
  3. If there are documented impacts develop programmatic/regulatory alternatives
  4. Develop consensus on preferred approach
  5. Implement a preferred program to address septic system Issues
- Members of the Committee introduced themselves and described their professional and experience on Lake George and in watershed protection.
- Dave Wick introduced the process. Initially the intent is to:
  - Allow a 3-6 Month Process
  - Develop an understanding of the population of septic systems around Lake George.
  - Gather information on other septic inspection/regulatory programs in NYS.
  - Perform a literature review of relevant studies regarding septic systems and their impacts to waterbodies, specifically relating to nutrient inputs and public health impacts.
  - Provide summary information for the Committee to review and subsequently the make recommendations to the full Commission.
- The Lake George Regulatory Authority on Sewer Systems was explained.
- Chris Round facilitated a conversation on local/state inspection programs, relevant resources regarding the project objectives and individual insights on the Ad-hoc Committees charge.

The following Items were discussed

- Susan Wilson- Explained the Town of Bolton Septic Inspection Program
  - Bolton requires inspection at property transfer
  - Worked with Eric Murdoch -On Site
  - 168 Inspections Conducted
  - 3 Failures found and were addressed.
  - 11 Systems were replaced voluntarily by property owners due to age of system.
  - The Town of Bolton inspection process includes exposing septic tank, the Distribution Box , surcharging the system and Camera Inspection. The disposal field lines are not inspected internally and the surface around system is examined. Discussed the Town does look to verify size is adequate and separation distances are considered from record information.

- The Town is developing a database of their inspection findings so far.
  - The Owner pays for the inspection
  - The Town of Bolton has also developed new septic ordinance which requires replacement systems include installation of Enhanced Treatment Units where proximate to water bodies
- Tom Jarrett - Suggested resources include USEPA Low Flows Clearinghouse, MASSTC- Massachusetts Alternative Septic System Test Center, other manufacturers, and Lake Association (Finger Lakes)
- Chris Natvitsky indicated that lake nutrient levels have not changed because nutrients leaching from septic systems are being utilized by algae/algae blooms. Phosphorus is not increasing, reactive phosphorus is. Caffeine documented in lake by LGA research indicates septic release. Soils/percolation rates are important. Reported that two-thirds of systems are past life expectancy. Homeowners should be considered a utility operator. Important to note the difference between Bolton and Queensbury regulations and the importance of consistency
- Several participants noted the importance of having consistency around the lake and that Queensbury and Bolton programs differ slightly. Suggesting the use of a basin wide approach.
- There was discussion about the importance of defining what constitutes a system 'failure' as well as the importance of distinguish between operation failure and treatment failures
- Tom Snow indicated that it is important to understand problematic soils, mapping of soils to understand type of systems and which locations may require an alternative treatment system/advanced technology
- Ms. LaBombard advocated that Dresden adopt a septic inspection at property transfer
- Tom Snow described the City Watershed Programs and that East of Hudson and West of Hudson Systems differ. Septic Inspection Program has been in place for 12 years. Inspections are required every 5 years. The septic system contractor prepares an inspection form at pump out and it is provided to county and results summarized in a database .
- It was mentioned that a septic maintenance program can be thought of as analogous to an oil change.

- NYS Department of Health Design manual recommends pump out every two or three years.
- There are septic inspection programs on several Finger Lake communities including Skaneateles, Canandaigua, and Owasco.
- Dan Baruch explained the Lake George Septic initiative which included an inventory of septic systems, a mapping of soils, examination of site suitability. The Lake George septic initiative included a mailing to 400 residential properties within 500 feet of the lake and 100 feet of any tributary. Response rates approached 30-40 %
- Many communities would be in favor of developing a septic inspection program however most likely lack staff resource to implement
- When developing a regulation consider whether it is a homeowner self-performing inspection or whether it's the LGPC implementing inspections
- Bill Mason indicated many communities around the lake would support the development of an inspection program. It is important not to overstate the science and it's important to define what a failed system is and how to communicate that effectively. He advocated a watershed wide approach
- There was some discussion around how to engage the Towns within the Watershed and Dave Wick indicated it was his obligation to do so.
- Kathy Muncil suggested that a YouTube video be developed that demonstrates what an inspection looks like as it would be beneficial.
- Dave Floyd indicated it's important to recognize three communities: Dresden, Putnam and Ticonderoga are also largely located on Lake Champlain and that the regulation, if proposed, should acknowledge and address this issue.

### **Next Steps**

- Share meeting summary notes with municipalities within the watershed to begin engaging them in this initiative.
- Begin literature research
- Begin regulatory research
- Present findings as they are collected and during subsequent Committee meetings.

