



Waterford FOUNDATION, INC.

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I am writing on behalf of the Waterford Foundation Board of Directors to express our continued support for the water project envisioned by Loudoun County. At our last Board meeting on September 17, 2024, our Executive Director, Stephanie Thompson, presented an overview of salient issues for discussion, including concerns presented by a new citizen group and research that has been conducted by the Waterford Foundation staff and others. The Board voted unanimously to continue supporting the project that has expanded to include connecting Waterford and Paeonian Springs for both water and sewer. Our reasons for continued support are detailed below.

Background: In 2019 the Waterford Foundation Board voted to sign a community petition to seek County assistance in exploring the possibility for a community water system for the village of Waterford. At the time, the Board made the decision to support the petition as a property owner because several of the Foundation's properties do not have water and their use and income potential is limited by the lack of water. Having received the requisite percentage of signatures on the community petition, and as directed by the Board of Supervisors, Loudoun County Department of General Services (LCDGS) began a community water feasibility study in January 2021.

Detailed Analyses and Conclusions

Issue 1: Protecting the National Historic Landmark

Previous Waterford Foundation (WF) studies of undeveloped parcels within the proposed Waterford community water service area demonstrated that none of the undeveloped parcels are currently prohibited from development because of their lack of access to water. In other words, access to community water would not change the development potential of those parcels. The combined system would serve only service areas defined in Waterford and Paeonian Springs and would not serve parcels along the supply main running down the Clarkes Gap Road right-of-way. While WF has not studied the 89 undeveloped parcels in Paeonian Springs to determine whether access to water is a determining factor, Paeonian Springs lies well outside the boundaries of the Waterford National Historic Landmark (NHL) and is therefore outside the purview of the Foundation's mission.

Furthermore, development of any kind in Loudoun County is governed by the General Plan as outlined in the Zoning Ordinance. Access to community water does not unilaterally change the allowed development density of the parcels served by the water system without additional action by

the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, through processes that are transparent and open to public comment.

A significant threat to the integrity of the Landmark is the inability for homes without access to water to remain livable for the residents who maintain them. If a contributing historic structure is not livable it is likely to be abandoned and eventually lost. Therefore, bringing community water to the village to address water needs supports the long-term preservation of the NHL. In addition, a combined system with Paeonian Springs allows for the water supply infrastructure to be located outside the boundaries of the Landmark, eliminating potential negative impacts to the undeveloped rural viewshed critical to the integrity of the Waterford NHL. The combined system therefore represents a better solution for the Landmark than a system that would serve Waterford only. Given that the open spaces in Waterford are largely owned by the WF, our greatest fear was that there would be pressure to use WF land for the water infrastructure.

Issue 2: Ensuring Public Health, Wellbeing, and Safety

The WF, as one of the largest property owners within the NHL, must be concerned with public health and safety of the village and surrounding areas. There are currently multiple parcels within the NHL, including WF properties that have no water, little water, and/or unhealthy water. This is no small concern, especially as the majority of residents of the village are 65 and older and may be especially susceptible to water borne illnesses. There are homes in the village dependent on hand-dug wells that cannot meet Virginia Public Health Codes.

While the WF is not responsible for the wellbeing of villagers, we strive to be good neighbors and support the people who live here. There are too many villagers who have to worry about how much water they will have and of what quality. This presents a strain to mental health as well as physical and financial health. If a solution exists, the WF Board believes it is only right to pursue it. While some in the village talk about ways to boost low performing wells, no reputable engineering resource has come forward to offer a meaningful alternative. Shared wells create legal impediments and performance boosting strategies do nothing for properties with no water and/or no land on which to drill a well. The studies show the problem is only getting worse as time goes on.

In terms of the required update to the Waterford Wastewater facility that was planned long before this project was envisioned, we understand that wastewater treatment facilities are highly regulated. As such, as part of their design manual and to meet commissioning requirements, Loudoun Water must study the environmental impacts of the new facility and demonstrate that the treated wastewater will not negatively affect the surrounding environment. **The existing Waterford wastewater facility does not meet current environmental regulations**, which is why it must be replaced. Designing a new, more modern system that is capable of serving both communities while meeting environmental regulations is possible and will be an improvement that will protect our environment more effectively than the current system. Similarly, we understand that to commission a new public water supply system, Loudoun Water must study the potential impact to surrounding existing wells and must demonstrate that construction of the new utility will not negatively impact existing wells.

Finally, there is no fire suppression system in Waterford. Our historic homes and buildings are one fire away from destruction. The danger to villagers and their belongings as well as to WF properties and the precious history they hold is high. The water project now envisions the potential for fire suppression which will increase public safety substantially.

Issue 3: Supporting the Adaptive Use of WF Historic Properties

The National Trust for Historic Preservation supports adaptive reuse of historic buildings as the best means of preserving these unique resources. Buildings that are used and can generate enough income to support their ongoing maintenance are much more likely to survive over time. Each of our properties has unique issues and opportunities:

The Old School: this building is zoned as a community center and is the site of most of our major meetings, educational programs, and events including the annual Waterford Fair. However, because there is both insufficient and poor quality water, we can only use the building for large gatherings 59 days per year. The water in the building cannot be used for drinking or cooking, meaning that catered events must include the cost of water and ice. If WF was able to rent out the space more frequently, we could generate the income needed to provide more than just baseline upkeep and be a more productive resource to the village. A new well could be dug for this property, but because it is in a “red zone” as designated by the water study, there is no guarantee that it would be money well spent.

The Corner Store: this building is our most successful case of adaptive reuse, but it shares a well with the Pink House. Shared wells present many concerns, including legal disputes, disagreements about quality and quantity, and damage to underground connections that run under heavily traveled roads. Community water would solve all of those problems and ensure its continued success as a building that is fully utilized.

The Mill: While this building has water, it is not potable and due to its location is unlikely to be successful in obtaining quality water within the flood plain on which it is sited. Since its renovation, the Mill presents opportunities to increase its value as an educational resource. Community water would allow us to envision holding Craft School classes there, hosting seminars on milling practices, or using the space to exhibit some of our many historic artifacts.

The Chair Factory: While this building is currently rented, it can only be rented by individuals who live in the village or who have access to someone’s home in the village. With no water it is of limited use and we charge rental fees far below the actual value of the space.

The Three Barns of Waterford: All three offer space that could be used for many purposes. Without water, their use is extremely limited.

For all of these reasons, the WF Board remains supportive of the plan to bring community water to Waterford.

Sincerely yours,



Susan Manch
President, Waterford Foundation Board of Directors

cc. Waterford Foundation Board and Staff