

Northfield's Grandin Water District bill assigned to state committee for legislative authorization

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NORTHFIELD — The state Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government has been assigned a bill to authorize the formation of the Grandin Water District, Town Administrator Andrea Llamas announced at Tuesday's Selectboard meeting.

Authorization would fall under [bill S.2938](#). The bill was referred to the Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government on June 16 before the House of Representatives concurred with the assignment last week.

“Approval to create the Grandin Water District does not commit the town or customers to operate or fund the current water distribution system,” the town's Grandin Water District website notes. “The Grandin Water District Commissioners will evaluate those steps once the Grandin Water District is created.”

While he was unable to cite a specific timeline, Cameron Lease, director of communications and engagement for state Sen. Jo Comerford, said he and Comerford are optimistic that the authorization process will be swift, with a hearing to take place “soon.”

“You can certainly say we're working as hard as we can on this and we're pushing it forward for the town,” Lease explained.

Currently, the northern part of town is served by the East Northfield Water Co., a for-profit company, and the creation of what is being called the “Grandin Water District” would transition water services to a nonprofit.

The East Northfield Water Co., owned by Northfield Mount Hermon School, operated at a loss after the campus consolidated to Gill in 2005. With rate increases and business from Thomas Aquinas College, the company is now breaking even, but it does not have the capacity to make necessary improvements, including repairs along Pierson Road and Linden Avenue and equipment upgrades to comply with the state Department of Environmental Protection's filtration requirements. The company also has limited access to low-cost grants and loans, an issue the town believes can be solved by creating a nonprofit district with access to government funding.

Annual Town Meeting warrant Article 24, which was approved on May 2, allowed the town to send an act establishing the Grandin Water District to the state Legislature “in the hopes that

they'd be passed by the end of the term," according to a previous explanation from Llamas. Legislative authorization is the final step of approval needed to legally establish the district.

Meanwhile, Northfield has also been fielding interest from residents who might consider serving as one of three water commissioners. Thus far, Llamas announced, two prospective candidates have sent inquiries, with one having submitted required materials subsequent to expressing interest and the other not yet having communicated that they are still interested. According to Llamas, the Selectboard is set to review the candidate's forms and resumé at its next meeting.

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