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Woodridge Lake community working with DEP to upgrade sewers

By HENRY MOORE

GOSHEN — Goshen's Woodridge Lake has formalized efforts to find a way to comply with an order from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to upgrade the sewer system that processes waste from the private community. Homes around the 375 acre man-made lake utilize sewers that were installed by the Woodridge Lake Sewer District (District), an independent entity with taxing authority over residents to raise revenue to conduct operations. 685 residences are currently tied into a system that was initially designed in 1974 to process 200,000 gallons of wastewater daily, an amount that was downgraded by DEP in 1989 to accept 100,000 gallons. Residents were called to a special meeting Saturday to approve funding for a comprehensive study to analyze the situation.

At issue is the unique design of the treatment system and the amount of water being sent to the treatment plant. WLSO installed ridge and furrow leaching beds that kept the treated water from the plant beneath the surface of the ground. The 92 acre parcel on which the plant and filter beds sit is located within the Bantam River watershed, and the District is having trouble keeping its water in the ground. A detailed study was conducted in 2005 that concluded with two possible solutions; either upgrade the plant and fields, or to construct a pipeline to Torrington's treatment plant. Ken Green, Chairman of the District's planning committee noted that Torrington's reply to the study indicated that "They are not too excited about having us."

Contributing to the problem is the inconsistency of the amount of water being sent the District's treatment plant. During periods of prolonged rain or winter thaw, volume spikes between 55,000 to 3000,000 gallons per day, suggesting a huge amount of groundwater infiltration into the lines.

"There is a high probability that individual homeowners can reduce inappropriate water from entering the system," Paul Dombrowski, Vice President of Woodard & Curran, said. "Funding this study will allow us to conduct smoke tests to see if lawn drains are connected to the sewers, and to inspect homes for sump pumps that may be sending water into the lines."

The study will look at the condition of the main lines, recommend repairs, educate homeowners, and form the foundation for the ultimate plan to fix the capacity problem.

"The study conducted in 2005 presented us with costs between 6-10 million dollars to improve our plant and fields." Green told the group of 60 residents. "The Torrington option was priced between 10 and 15 million, an amount certain to grow given the amount of water we are experiencing."

By unanimous vote resident approved a plan by the District to fund \$253,350 of the \$563,000 program. The balance of \$309,650, or 55% of the total cost, will come from the Connecticut Clean Water Fund. Green advised the group to “Brace your selves for an expensive fix.”

The Town of Goshen is not liable for the potential fines that could be levied or legal actions that could be taken by the DEP, or civil penalties of up to \$25,000 per day for non-compliance by the District. While the organizing documents of the District allowed certain areas outside Woodridge Lake to be tied into the system at the request of the Town, Goshen’s Water Pollution Control Authority nullified the option during a special meeting on July 9, 2001.

To keep property owners fully informed about the progress of study and solutions to problems individual homeowners might face, the District launched a new web site:

www.WLSD-Goshen.org