

Sewer District Update

Capital Projects

Last October, the taxpayers of the Woodridge Lake Sewer District (WLSD) approved two capital projects: a project to upgrade our eight pumping stations; and a project to reduce the inflow and infiltration (I/I) of water into our sewage collection system. The taxpayers also approved a \$983,000 loan from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), or a lender offering more favorable terms, to finance these projects.

In June, DEEP gave final approval to a 20 year loan at 2% for these projects. Our consulting engineers, Woodard & Curran (W&C) have since completed an inspection of our 16 mile collection system, including a TV inspection of the interior of our sewer pipe. W&C is completing bid documents for both the I/I and pump station projects. These projects are expected to be out to bid in the fall.

Facilities Plan

In July, the WLSD submitted a Preliminary Summary Report (the Report) for a new Facilities Plan to DEEP, prepared by W&C. A new Facilities Plan for the WLSD is a requirement of DEEP and the Report is the product of three years work by the Board, its Planning Committee and W&C.

We expect to meet with DEEP staff in September when they have completed their review of the Report. We are prepared to advocate for the Facilities Plan recommended in the Report (a new treatment plant adjacent to our existing 40 year old plant) as the least expensive alternative for the taxpayers of the WLSD and believe that this plan is environmentally sound. We have retained the environmental law firm of Shipman & Goodwin to assist us in this process.

The Report states that the Torrington alternative (building a pipeline and pumping our wastewater to Torrington) is beyond the means of the WLSD's tax-

payers. Implementing the Torrington alternative is estimated at \$20.5 million. The alternative recommended in the Report (a new plant, on-site) is also expensive, estimated at \$11.4 million, but far less costly than the Torrington option.

We have asked for a certain amount of flexibility from DEEP in its review of the Report and the recommended new Facilities Plan. For example, we have requested an increase in the daily limit of wastewater we are permitted to treat at the new plant from 100,000 gallons per day (gpd) to 125,000 gpd, in order to accommodate additional homes that will be constructed in the WLSD. We have also requested that the WLSD be permitted to continue using our disposal fields into which wastewater is discharged after treatment. Since the treated water from the new plant will be near drinking water quality we believe DEEP should be flexible in interpreting its rules for groundwater disposal of wastewater.

The WLSD will seek loans and grants from DEEP and the federal government to minimize the costs of implementing the new Facilities Plan, to the WLSD's taxpayers. Once we reach agreement with DEEP on a new Facilities Plan, have final estimates of the costs of implementing the Plan and take into account any loans and grants available, the taxpayers will be asked to consider and approve an appropriation of funds and bonding for the projects.

Taxes

WLSD will need to determine the allocation of the costs of implementing the Plan among the taxpayers following a public hearing(s). At the present time, the budget of the WLSD is allocated among the taxpayers by an ad valorem method based on the assessed value of each property. This results in the lowest annual sewer tax now paid by a residential taxpayer in the WLSD of \$326 and the highest tax being paid of \$8,291, with the average residential taxpayer paying \$1,234 a year.

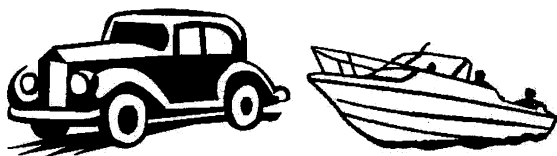
The Board is considering whether continuing the ad valorem system is the fairest method of allocating

the costs of implementing the new Facilities Plan. An ad valorem method for paying for sewage costs is not common in CT as only a small number of jurisdictions in CT use such a method. Other allocation methods include using flow meters (not possible in WLS D), estimating usage, a flat user charge for all taxpayers, road frontage, or a combination of methods. Our sewer taxes are already very high. The cost to an average taxpayer of \$1,234 compares to a statewide average of \$369.

The Finance Committee of the WLS D has been working to develop and recommend to the Board the "fairest" method of allocating the costs of implementing the new Facilities Plan. We all know that increased taxes are never welcome and what seems fair to one taxpayer will inevitably seem unfair to another. However WLS D determines to allocate the costs, the implementation of the new Facilities Plan will cause all of our sewer taxes to rise.

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