

AVON WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY

June 23, 2016

Selectmen's Chambers, 7:00 p.m.

Town of Avon

PUBLIC HEARING / SPECIAL MEETING

AWPCA

Present: Eric Johansen, Chairman
 Terry Ryan, Vice Chairman
 Tom Armstrong
 Chris Roy (Recluse from Public Hearing portion of meeting)
 Lawrence Baril, Town Engineer

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Avon Water Pollution Control Authority was called to order at 7:05 pm by Mr. Johansen. Mr. Johansen invited Mr. Baril to begin the presentation he prepared and reminded the audience to provide their name and address for the record and encouraged audience members to hold their questions until after Mr. Baril's presentation.

II. OLD BUSINESS

2016 – 8 Potential Sanitary Sewer Service for Paperchase Trail South

Mr. Baril provided the slide presentation which included:

- 1) Primary Drivers for the project – High need area, petition received from homeowners, age of septic systems, high ground water, area abuts existing public sewer
- 2) Project Goals – To provide gravity sanitary sewer service to first-floor connections, minimize disturbance to environments – particularly wetlands, locate manholes to minimize driver impediments, determine interest and feasibility to bring in other utilities, complete road overlay after both projects are finished (assuming Town budget approval)
- 3) Work completed to date – Numerous work items completed to date including field and office survey, preliminary design, prepared preliminary cost estimates and went out to bid twice – first for combined North and South Projects and then for just the South project.
- 4) Combined Project specifics – Approximately 4,500 ft. of sanitary main, 26 manholes, 43 service laterals, mainline depth between 8 ft and 17 ft, 10 residents may have to pump, road partially closed during construction, temporary pavement over disturbed roadway, complete road overlay after both phases are finished (paid for under the pavement management project).
- 5) Reviewed bids received – The bottom three most interesting as these bids came in close together which shows the contractors understood the project which is good news. The bad news is the resulting assessment estimate which is between \$20,000 and \$22,000 per resident. The prevailing wage law and the timing of the bid increased the costs. The project was then broken into two projects.
- 6) South project specifics – Approximately 2250 feet of sanitary main, 15 manholes, 19 service laterals, mainline depth between 8 ft. and 17 feet, three residents may need to pump, road will be partially closed during construction, temporary pavement over disturbed roadway, gets sewer to existing via easement, expectation was that project would come in below prevailing wage limits and cost significantly less.
- 7) Map illustrating 19 homes involved in the southern section
- 8) South Project bids received – The numbers came down significantly but not what the Town was looking for. The good news is the difference is close enough between each bid. Feedback from contractors included confusion over the prevailing wage law. An addendum was issued to

specifically address the prevailing wage law. Because of the high assessment calculation, Mr. Baril's recommendation is to scrap the bids. Additional feedback from contractors include the bidding time of year. Possible recommendation is to bid the project over the winter before contractors set up their 2017 contracts, reduce the scope of the project and using Town staff to conduct the survey layout to reduce the cost, bid the project as unit-based with pay limits, provide storage location that allows saturated backfill material to dry, remove the easement restoration.

- 9) Potential project schedule – Mr. Baril provided key dates planned for the project including the dates for sending/receiving bid packages, public information meetings, construction and assessment dates.

Mr. Baril concluded his presentation and invited questions from the audience.

Ms. Lily Biernat from 30 Hurdle Fence Drive inquired whether residents were present to vote whether we want the project or not. Mr. Johansen mentioned the Board listens to public opinion and clarified that it is up to the Board to vote and determine whether the project goes forward. Mr. Biernat of 30 Hurdle Fence Drive mentioned he has lived on Hurdle Fence since the early 70s. He has a septic system and has not had any problems. He is interested in knowing how many people had problems with their septic system and inquired whether the Town examined any of the septic systems. Mr. Baril replied the Town has not inspected the septic systems. Mr. Biernat solicited opinions from individuals. Mr. Baril explained the process by noting the two specific drivers for the proposed project. He mentioned the Town's master sewer facilities plan in 2006 where among many factors of the study, prioritizing neighborhoods for future sewer extensions was included in this study. The study was prioritized by age of the system, depth to groundwater, depth to bedrock, prevalence of failures. The highest score generally identifies the highest need. The goal is to manage water pollution. Leaking or failing septic systems produce pollution. Mr. Biernat expressed he would like more information and asked whether the pipe will go over his property. It was clarified that the pipe will go over 30 Paperchase rather than 30 Hurdle Fence. Mr. Baril mentioned the study noted the Paperchase Trail neighborhood in the moderate to high future need neighborhood and the Town was approached by a resident who had a petition from residents that said they were interested in having the Town look into the feasibility of extending sewers. There were about 22 signatures on the petition.

Mr. Paul Valente of 21 Paperchase Trail noted he signed the petition because he was interested in the feasibility study but was neither for nor against the project. He noted he has a septic system that is 40-plus years old. He referenced his wife's feedback in real estate selling homes with septic systems relative to home inspections. Mr. Biernat mentioned another home he owns in Connecticut is over 100 years old and the septic system and well are doing perfectly well. Mr. Baril noted it could be different soil and different use. Mr. Biernat wanted more information on his septic system and inquired whether other homeowners are having problems. Mr. Baril mentioned the Town does not manage septic system surveys or evaluations. This falls under the purview of the Farmington Valley Health District (FVHD).

Mr. Andy Case, 64 Paperchase Trail inquired about available information from the FVHD and Mr. Baril clarified that the Town does request information regarding septic tanks.

Mr. Herbert Hirsch of 64 Hurdle Fence noted his septic system is 50 years old and he's uncomfortable with his septic system and would like sewer. He is for the project.

Mr. Richard Getz of 18 Paperchase Trail understood from the last meeting that at some point, sewers will be in the neighborhood. Mr. Johansen noted that's actually not the case. We don't have a mandate to put sewers through the entire town. We are to maintain the existing system and as the need is, look into making it available in other areas, based on the strategic plan. The paving plan is considered also.

There are neighborhoods in need of sewers but choose not to have sewers, similar to the Fox Den neighborhood. Mr. Baril clarified his prior comment noting that in time, the entire town in Avon and most towns will be sewerred as it's the most efficient way to manage the environment and the issues associated with human waste.

A resident noted there are no hard facts that septic systems will fail at a certain time. His system works. It could work for 100 years. He signed the petition because he wanted to know what his options were. He thinks the sewer system is appropriate given the information he has received.

Mr. Armstrong commented about the added cost involved if the Town is forced to dig up a new road to resurface for a new sewer system. In the current situation, the residents would pay for the patch but not pay for the road getting resurfaced. Mr. Armstrong noted the Board has heard stories of residents having to pay \$30,000 to \$40,000 (and sometimes higher) for redoing individual leach fields. That is financed at the homeowner's finance rate. The Town has 10 year low-term finance terms where sewers do go in.

Mr. Gary Palmer of 20 Hurdle Fence Drive commented he has been a resident since 1985 and the house was built in 1964. Mr. Palmer, as an Accountant, is privy to sad stories of the cost of replacing leach fields and septic systems. It's a question of risk. He would prefer to pay an assessment now for sewers than have to pay for a septic system overhaul with new a leach field and then pay an assessment down the road. He also thinks from a property value perspective, some of the cost from the assessment will be recovered with the property value of our home. From a financial perspective, it makes sense to him. Mr. Palmer inquired about the assessment for the two projects, North and South, and inquired if the Town received bids for the North project. Mr. Baril replied that the Town has not received bids for the North project. The intent is to get the South project in first because that creates the connection to the existing sewer and that makes the North project viable. Mr. Baril replied to Mr. Palmer's question about whether the assessments will be combined noting that that decision is up to the Board but his recommendation is to combine the assessment into a single project for assessment purposes only.

Mr. Ed Zalneraitis of 40 Paperchase Trail noted his septic system failed and was replaced. It's a public health issue. It's not going to cost less in the future. It's going to cost more in the future.

Ms. Celese Zizzamia of 49 Hurdle Fence said she is not for or against the project and noted if the cost is lower we would be more in favor of the project. She just moved to the area. Her septic passed but was told it could go any minute because it's never been replaced. When they were looking at other homes it is more attractive when sewers are in the area. There is less worry about your septic tank. Mr. Baril replied to Ms. Zizzamia's question about the three homes that will need to be pumped.

Mr. Anthony Butler of 63 Hurdle Fence inquired about the additional costs associated with connecting to the public sewer. Mr. Baril replied noting the cost depends on the resident's lot and location of septic tank. The discussion this evening is about the assessment which covers the installation of the mainline sewer and the lateral stubs to every property at the street line. When a resident want to connect, they will hire a contractor. Mr. Baril confirmed Mr. Butler's question that the portion of connecting to the house is not included in financing with the Town. Mr. Butler mentioned he does not see the overall benefit of going through 2 years of construction to having a system that was just inspected and pumped about a year or so ago, that may last another ten years, with the idea it might fail sometime soon. He's going to spend \$30,000 either way and he's not sure if it makes sense. A number of people in the neighborhood who have replaced their septic systems and it seems like we are going to make them pay a second time. Mr. Armstrong noted that if you have a septic system or leach field, you don't have to connect. You receive an assessment. If you have a failure, you will be ordered to connect. Mr. Baril clarified the order to connect comes from the FVHD, not the Town.

Mr. Jim Standish of 60 Paperchase Trail – From what he understands, if the project goes through, everyone will have a sewer connection in their yard whether they connect or not is up to them. Board members confirmed this. Mr. Standish continued noting you are going to pay the assessment to put it down through the streets and it's a smart move to get it while it's available. It's not going to get less expensive.

Mr. Paul Valente of 21 Paperchase Trail – appreciates Mr. Baril's efforts in getting the cost down and coming up with different scenarios. Mr. Baril replied to Mr. Valente's question about Avon Water Co. noting that residents would pay the cost of installing water, based on prior information presented by Avon Water Company.

Mr. Chris Roy of 50 Hurdle Fence – Noted that when a septic tank is inspected, the tanks are not the problem. The problem lies in the leach field. You have no idea what goes on outside the tank. Mr. Roy commented that the soil in our neighborhood is lousy. This is a bitter pill but a pill that you have to look at swallowing. It's not going to get any better. Mr. Roy commented about an acquaintance who spent \$48,000 putting in a new system in his own house with his own machinery. It's imperative to look at getting a line in the ground. You don't have to connect to it. Mr. Roy commented about the tremendous amount of work Mr. Baril has done.

Mr. Robert Bernaduci of 41 Paperchase Trail mentioned he started the ball rolling and is still for the program. His system is working well. If he had a choice to choose a home with a sewer system over a home with a septic system, he would pick the sewer system. Mr. Bernaduci inquired about the \$2,500 hook up fee and whether it could be discussed as discounted or abated because of the large amount residents will need to pay for the assessment. Mr. Johansen replied that anything can be discussed but it will set a precedent for the next neighborhood and noted what needs to be done is to compensate for that is to raise the fees. Avon is a bargain for the sewer user fees and the connection fee. At some point the Town will not have any connection fees. The Town will be sewered. The only fees to maintain the system will be the user fees and the user fees will go way up. We will need to find a balance in the sewer fund to manage the system. The Town is trying to maintain a healthy balance fund in order to protect anything that could happen in the system in the future.

Mr. Armstrong reviewed the area towns' connection fees and mentioned the Board has discussed increasing the connection fees and mentioned the Board could discuss the possibility of grandfathering the connection fee at \$2,500.

Mr. Johansen noted should the project go out to bid, AWPCA will hold another public information meeting to discuss the numbers that come back and discuss any questions.

Mr. Bernaduci commented about grant writing and inquired whether he or someone else could look elsewhere for possible grant funding. Mr. Armstrong suggested to look at the regulations but Mr. Armstrong's recollection is that the regulations states the Town has the ability to offer those people who finance, up to 10 years to finance their assessment. The statute says the Town cannot make money on the assessment but can get back the cost. The rate is the rate at the time of the assessment. Mr. Bernaduci concluded he is for the project and thanked the members for their time.

Mr. Baril responded to a resident's question regarding why the project was broken into two projects noting the prevailing wage requirement.

Mr. Johansen noted the intention of the meeting, in part, was a public information meeting but also an opportunity for the Board to vote on the project, if the numbers came in at the level the Board hoped for. In light of where the numbers came in, he would like to take a consensus of people who are for

going forward with the project. His plan now would be to wait until the fall/winter to put it back out to bid.

Mr. Armstrong recommended to close the public hearing and review the process of securing the easement and defer any votes until the next meeting. Mr. Baril noted the Town has conversed with the owner at 30 Paperchase and there is a plan.

Mr. Johansen summarized the meeting and noted the plan going forward is to reject the bids received, go back out to bid in the fall and hope with a strong emphasis with prevailing wages that there will be more favorable results. We will hold another meeting, similar to this one and discuss the numbers that come in. Any of the other points that you may have, such as rates and hook-up fees, will be discussed at that point.

Mr. Roy of 50 Hurdle Fence wished to conduct a straw poll for the commission to see how many people would go for the project in the \$20,000 range. As a concept, how many people for the sewer and how many people are against it, by a show of hands? The majority of the residents raised their hands. Mr. Johansen noted that at the same time you would like to wait and get it lower. Mr. Johansen noted that the only risk is two months from now, their system fails and either they will pump for another year or they will put in a septic system and still have to pay the fee. Mr. Johansen provided a personal narrative where he had sewer available in his street when he bought his house. His septic tank failed two years after moving in. There was no indication that his septic tank was going to fail. There is no way to go out and find out how long a system is going to last. When you go and sell a house with a septic system in Avon, it's a negative. If you have the ability to hook up to the system, at least the cost of hooking up to the system will be part of the transaction of selling the house. The money will be taken off the sale price of the house. It's a very good value. I can't think of any negatives that way except over a 10 year period, you make a payment into a fund. Once you're connected to sewers, you don't think about it again.

Mr. Armstrong noted he's not sure how much more can be shaved but he heard the audience say they would like the Commission to try and get a lower cost.

Mr. Johansen made into record an email received from a resident at 12 Hurdle Fence who is opposed to going forward with the project.

MOTION: Mr. Armstrong motioned to close the public hearing. The motion, seconded by Mr. Ryan, received unanimous approval.

[Note: Mr. Roy joined the Commission for the post hearing portion of the meeting)

Mr. Baril noted the easement should be pursued and will present additional information to the AWPCA for the July meeting and reiterated the plans to have the Town take over the restoration of that lot which will lower the costs. Discussion included the costs associated with acquiring the easement and re-bidding the project with both a lump sum and cost-plus, handling the wet, saturated back-fill and drafting a letter to FVHD.

X ADJOURNMENT –

MOTION: Mr. Johansen motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m. The motion, seconded by Mr. Ryan, received unanimous approval.

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Essex, Clerk