

AVON WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY
February 8, 2018
Selectmen's Chambers, 7:00 p.m.
Town of Avon

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Avon Water Pollution Control Authority was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mr. Johansen.

AWPCA

Present: Eric Johansen, Chairman
Terry Ryan, Vice Chairman
Chris Roy
Lawrence Baril, Town Engineer
Tim Foster, Superintendent of Sanitary Sewers

Absent: Tom Armstrong
Keith Jones

II. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING –

MOTION: Mr. Roy made a motion for approval of the January 11, 2018 minutes. The motion, seconded by Mr. Ryan, received unanimous approval.

III. COMMUNICATION FROM THE AUDIENCE – Please see below.

IV. NEW BUSINESS – None

V. OLD BUSINESS -

2018 – 1 Potential Sewer Extension for the Highwood Area

Mr. Johansen invited Mr. Baril to begin the presentation he prepared for the Potential Sanitary Sewer Project for the Highwood area which included the following. (Note: Full presentation is on the Town of Avon's web site under the Engineering Department.)

- 1) Primary Drivers for the Project – Various drivers include high need area as noted in sewer facilities plan, petition received from 31 area homeowners, age of septic systems, some streets appearing on the Pavement Management Plan, anticipated high ground water and area within reasonable distance to existing public sewer. Mr. Baril reviewed the presentation slide which illustrated where the Highwood / Carriage Drive area falls within the sewer facilities plan.
- 2) Project Goals – Provide gravity sewer service to first-floor connections at all residence if possible, minimize disturbance to environment, locate manholes, and determine interest and feasibility to bring other utilities to the neighborhood and complete road overlay after projects are finished (assuming Town budget approval).
- 3) Work Completed to Date: Performed limited field and office survey, researched Farmington Valley Health District's records, identified and evaluated connection routes, prepared preliminary design, plan and profile, prepared preliminary cost estimate range
- 4) Total Project Specifics – Approximately 5,400 feet of sanitary main with 26 manholes, 58 service laterals, and depth of mainline between 8 feet and 12 feet. There will be 5 to 7 residences that may need to pump, road will be partially closed during construction, temporary pavement over disturbed roadway. The complete road overlay will be after

project is finished assuming Town budget approval and is not paid for under this project. The project may need to be split into two phases to keep in the half million dollar range. Mr. Baril reviewed the map which illustrated the project area and preliminary design such as known septic tank locations, parcels identified as probable pump required and the proposed sanitary mainline

- 5) Project Cost Estimate – Soft costs of \$15,000 include field survey, borings, design, administration and project management and construction inspection. The construction cost estimate range based on recent similar projects at Winding Lane/Stony Corners is \$1,068,000 to \$1,304,400. The total cost estimate range is \$1,083,000 to \$1,449,400. Mr. Baril noted that the cost to build a sewer in a neighborhood is paid for by the benefitting property owners. The State provides the legal authority to the AWPCA to recoup the costs of sanitary sewer projects to benefit assessments. The number of properties that benefit divided into the total cost of the project and each benefitting property pays that pro rata share. This is allowed by State law. Mr. Baril noted that undeveloped properties are assessed but these assessments are not due until the time the property is developed. Individuals that are registered as elderly and fixed income with the tax assessor may request a deferment of their assessment. Properties requiring installation of a pump to connect to the sewer system may be granted a reduction in the assessment. Projects that cross zoning districts may be assessed differently although Mr. Baril noted the current proposed project does not cross zoning districts.
- 6) Mr. Baril reviewed the formula which was used to calculate the benefit assessment noting there are 58 properties served divided by the cost estimate range. The approximate assessment per property is between \$18,413 and \$24,990. Mr. Baril reviewed the past bids received for a recent sewer project noting that the bids come in in a very wide range. It depends how risk averse the contractors are. Until one digs in the ground, one doesn't know with certainty what is in the ground. An unidentified audience member suggested there should be an asterisk on the slide to show it doesn't include the hook-up to one's house.
- 7) Other Costs – Mr. Baril reviewed the other costs incurred at the time of connection such as connection charge and connection cost (to the contractor hired by homeowner), annual sewer use fee and sewer permit fee. Mr. Baril replied to an audience member's question stating he is hesitant to give an estimate for a connection cost because it's dependent on each lot depending on several factors such as distance from septic tank to road, depth and impediments such as trees and rock, landscaping, and restoration requirements. Mr. Baril also noted the Farmington Valley Health District was invited to attend to give more insight. Mr. Baril noted the annual sewer use fee is likely to see a significant increase in the coming year while the connection charge could increase as it hasn't increased in approximately ten years. Residents are not required to connect just because there is sewer available.
- 8) Potential Project Schedule – Mr. Baril explained the many steps within the potential project schedule noting an estimated completion of Phase 1 in November 2018 and Phase II Spring/Summer 2019. He reiterated the project is contingent upon AWPCA approval.
- 9) Frequently Asked Questions – Mr. Baril reviewed the commonly asked questions which answered questions such as whether a resident is required to connect, questions regarding the assessment and other costs. The assessments typically do not have to be paid back in one lump sum. Mr. Baril noted that in his time, there has been a 10-year payback period with a modest interest rate which is tied to the bond rate with no prepayment penalty. If the property is transferred, the assessment has to be paid in full. He also explained next steps and how the Town will determine the location of a resident's lateral connection.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Mr. Johansen invited the audience to ask questions, requesting they state their name and address for the record.

Mr. Del Tepley of 10 Highwood Circle inquired about where on the street the sewer is installed. Mr. Baril replied that the intent is to run the sewer typically down the center of a travel line which offers more room for the contractor to move their equipment and allows traffic to go through that area. It also depends on utility, water and storm drainage locations. Mr. Tepley also asked about storm drains and Mr. Baril replied that storm drains is not part of the potential sewer project. Mr. Baril replied to Mr. Tepley's question regarding any effort to include natural gas in the project noting Mr. Baril will reach out to Connecticut Natural Gas. He also explained what the gas company has done in the past with potential sewer extensions to gauge residents' interest in connecting to natural gas.

Jordan Grossman of 34 Highwood Drive commented to the Board that they have a very hard decision to make in this economic climate not knowing a state budget, a federal budget, it's a difficult decision. There has been \$18,000 to about \$23,000 on the table plus for someone who just put in a septic tank plus a line that needs to be run plus construction. Mr. Grossman asked his fellow residents to do a little homework to see what it would cost to replace just the septic tank. He remarked that the chance of one's leaching field going down is very slim and a septic tank is about \$5,000 to \$6,000. Mr. Grossman wanted to share with the Board when the petition was going around, the petition was under the auspices that there was a good chance natural gas would also come down. But hearing tonight, that chance is very slim and one will also need to pay for the hook up from the street to your house – they are not going to hook up everyone's house to natural gas. They are going to run the line down the street and you will have to pay for that. Mr. Grossman told the Board this is not the time – the economic climate we are in where we are looking at normal tax increases for this town and we are not sure what we are going to receive from the State relative to the ECS grants that we are getting from the State and it's less and less. The taxes are going to go up in this town. Mr. Grossman continued to state it's his advice to table this, come back to it in a couple years, see where we are. He noted it's not the right time to do a project like this.

Mr. Johansen noted the Board wanted to have someone from the Health District at the meeting to provide correct information regarding the costs to put in a new septic system. Mr. Johansen noted although he's a professional engineer he's not an expert on the systems. His experience and the experience from the health department, the cost to put in a new system far outweighs what the fees would be to do this work. The number one reason systems fail is the leaching field. The baffles can be messed up but replaced. Once that happened, it causes deterioration of the leaching field. Mr. Johansen is aware of the soil conditions in the Highwood / Carriage Drive area where they are not conducive to a modern system. It would need an engineered system – bringing in sand and soil which is very expensive. Mr. Johansen recommended that if residents are concerned, they should call a contractor to find out how much it would cost to connect one's house to public sewer and ask how much the replacement cost would be for a new septic system should one's system fail. He noted it's different for everyone depending on certain conditions and reiterated how important it is to get the information from professionals.

Mr. Johansen replied to a question asked by Chris Edge of 4 Brookmoor Road. Mr. Johansen noted the Town said there is no change for (real estate) assessment by the Town based on whether a home has sewer or not and also discussed the value of one's home based on information he heard from a realtor. The realtor was in attendance at a prior AWPCA meeting and shared her experience with two homes that were on the market and needed new septic systems in order for the sale to go through. One cost \$50,000 and one for \$60,000. The realtor

noted that it's hard to sell a house with an old septic system. It's a bonus if a house has the ability to connect to the public sewer.

A realtor from the audience noted it's harder to sell a house with an older septic system and commented a buyer would want some kind of credit if purchasing a house within the Highwood Drive / Highwood Circle area if there is a 60 year-old septic system. If there is sewer in the area – that's definitely a great selling point and will make your house more competitive and would be a big mistake not to do it.

Mr. Baril commented he wanted to address a comment made earlier. He noted that Public Works started to do the work to prepare Highwood for paving. Mr. Baril learned that and stopped Public Works from paving because if they did pave the road, it could be about 20 years that sewers are brought in. If sewers are brought in after paving, the cost will increase as the road will need to be fixed as an added expense to the sewer project. There is a time constraint. Mr. Rick Shane of 8 Highwood Circle noted that driving on Highwood Circle is like driving on pebbles. Mr. Baril agreed with his second comment noting that if sewers are not brought in, the road will be paved sooner. Mr. Baril further commented the Engineering Department receives phone calls from residents who receive information that is not completely true regarding septic tank failures. He noted that replacing a septic tank, depending on site constraints, could be replaced for \$5,000 or \$6,000 but leaching fields are the heart of one's septic system and a different problem. This part of the septic system is not cheap. Mr. Foster noted it would be advisable to take the time and call a contractor to obtain a quote to put a septic system on someone's property if there is a full failure. Mr. Foster also noted that payment would be immediate – there wouldn't be a 10-year payback and noted residents could also obtain a fairly accurate cost to connect the lateral to one's house.

Lee Lester of 36 Carriage Drive noted she is a real estate agent. She noted there are buyers out there for our neighborhood. Are they looking for houses on well and septic? No. Many will not look at a house if it's not connected to the sewer line. She noted that recently on Carriage Drive, a new field and septic cost \$25,000 and noted it could be even more. The fields are getting old. Ms. Lester noted it's an opportunity now and it shouldn't be missed similar to another neighborhood which was a missed opportunity. She noted that in two years, we won't be able to do it for this price. She further commented that a big selling feature is to have one's house have the ability to connect. If the septic inspection fails, there is a line to connect. Ms. Lester acknowledged there are neighbors who have put in a new system, put in a lot money and it's working fine. She noted there are buyers who are renting who are waiting for the right properties to come on the market and we shouldn't miss this opportunity.

Ms. Joyce Shane of 8 Highwood Circle inquired how many failures in the area. Mr. Ryan recommended Ms. Shane to follow-up with the Farmington Valley Health District and offered the phone number for Ms. Dianne Harding, the Chief Sanitarian.

An audience member asked if it's correct that the AWPCA would not go ahead unless they receive a 75 % participation. Mr. Johansen responded noting the AWPCA has the authority to put sewers in regardless – it's not the intention to force sewers on anyone in Town. There have been issues in the past where there hasn't been a lot of feedback until all the costs are in and then people are coming back, many times based on bad information. Mr. Johansen noted a survey will be sent to residents. Mr. Johansen further explained that the mission of the AWPCA is water pollution control and it is to prevent water pollution. When one has high water table and old septic systems, even though they are working technically, they are creating water pollution.

Mr. Peter Lavieri of 59 Carriage Drive noted the project comes at the wrong time as he just put in a new system five or six years ago. He also noted his property is downhill and will need to pump and mentioned that's a negative aspect. Mr. Lavieri noted he wouldn't want a sewer assessment if he wasn't getting any benefit from it. He inquired about the risk of back-up. Mr. Foster answered Mr. Lavieri's question noting Mr. Foster explained the pump system at his house. He mentioned there is a curb stop which has a built-in check to prevent back-flow and other back-flow preventers at the wet well. There is a dual-check system. He mentioned it could fail – anything could fail but it's pertinent what one is putting into their own wet well. If one dumps grease, rags or abuse it, one will foul the checks. Mr. Foster noted he's had his pump system for 11 years. He noted it's an expense but his electric bill is not an astronomical one. He noted a back-up generator protects the wet well and protects one's house. Mr. Lavieri added the system installed at his home, 1,500 gallon tank and galley system for the field, designed for a 4-bedroom house, cost just under \$20,000 five or six years ago. He noted that someone shouldn't be scared off investigating a septic system thinking it might be much more than a sewer system.

A resident inquired if the survey could include natural gas. Mr. Johansen mentioned it will be included.

Mr. Kyle Lamontagne of 4 Candlewood Lane noted it's important to point out that if one's system fails and the contractor comes out, the price will be vastly inflated. He wanted to echo prior comments that one should get the cost and Mr. Lamontagne provided his experience receiving a price from a contractor. Mr. Baril responded to Mr. Lamontagne's request for a list of contractors and noted residents could call the Farmington Valley Health District.

Mr. Greg Cassidy of 19 Highwood Drive noted the price one receives today if they call someone to come out – it may not be honored for a future project. He asked if one wants to sink their money into a septic or a sewer. In Mr. Cassidy's opinion, he noted it's not a comparable product - one is far better than another.

Mr. Bud Usich of 59 Highwood Drive inquired about the turn-around time for the survey. Mr. Baril noted the survey will have a two week turn-around time. Mr. Usich clarified his question noting what would the turn-around time be for the Board's response. Mr. Johansen hoped to have the information for the next meeting.

Mr. Tom Clark of 73 Carriage Drive asked if the surveys will be factored into the decision and asked for the process for reaching a conclusion. Mr. Johansen replied a decision is made noting factors are considered such as what the public wants and issues with water pollution control. Mr. Johansen commented that he has been on the Board for ten years and every situation is different. Mr. Johansen noted his experience with a failing septic system about 1 ½ year after moving into his house. There were sewers available on his street and he was able to tie in. The failure happened during the winter and needed to have the tank pumped weekly while waiting to tie in.

Mr. Johansen expressed appreciation to the audience members and noted the next AWPCA meeting.

Board members discussed details for what the survey should include. Mr. Baril acknowledged their comments. Additional follow-up from the public meeting also included the importance of residents to have the correct information, such as the price of a septic system repair.

2017 – 5 Cost of Service Analysis – Mr. Baril noted he will have a report from the consultant in about a week.

VI PLANNING & ZONING MATTERS – Mr. Baril responded to Mr. Roy's question about the status of the Avon Center Project noting there has been a design change and a meeting will be held with the developers.

VII COMMUNICATION FROM STAFF – Mr. Baril commented on the Town of Farmington treatment plant upgrade and the intermunicipal agreement will be modified. He also discussed the plan to replace the 12 inch line near the Farmington town line. Discussion also included the billing process for treatment costs billed to the Town of Avon. Mr. Baril provided the historical reasoning on how it was determined which towns will be earmarked for a treatment plant. Mr. Roy commented that engineer studies were done that not all 169 will have treatment plants.

VIII COMMUNICATION FROM MEMBERS – Mr. Johansen suggested the Board look at the user fee at the next meeting.

IX OTHER BUSINESS – None

X ADJOURNMENT – Mr. Johansen motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m. The motion, seconded by Mr. Roy, received unanimous approval.

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Essex, Clerk