

August 28, 2024

Town Board Q & A meeting regarding potential Sewer District

Present: Supervisor Paul Aubertine, Councilman Dan Wiley, Councilman Alan Wood, Councilman Tim Maloney, Matt Cooper and David Powers from Barton and Loguidice and approximately 87 residents.

Absent: Councilwoman Heather Miller – excused.

Supervisor Aubertine opened the meeting at 6pm with the pledge of allegiance.

Supervisor Aubertine address the audience with rules of the meeting. He stated that to speak you must sign in and you must address the board. He said that back and forth conversation would not be allowed. Supervisor Aubertine said that the meeting was simply a fact-finding mission for the proposed sewer district and that the board wants to hear the residents concerns and then they will decide whether or not to move forward. He said that the meeting was being held in good faith and he appreciated everyone's attendance.

Supervisor Aubertine introduced, and turned the meeting over to engineers Matt Cooper and David Powers from Barton and Loguidice.

Matt Cooper gave a little background on the potential district stating that the town has quite a few water districts and in 2019 began exploring the possibility of a sewer district. He said that the town applied for an EPG grant to do an interest survey. They decided to do the area known as water district 1. Matt said the interest survey went out reflecting the potential cost of \$1,200.00 per year. He said that this cost was not favorable, and they began to get as many grants as the could to lower the cost of the project.

Matt explained that the Bi-partisan infrastructure law passed and more funding was available. He said that in 2023 funding did finally come through with a 50% funding – 0% interest loans. He said that a third-party independent consulting firm was hired by the lending agency, to come to Cape Vincent. He said that they went through the town and performed various tasks to complete their study. In the end, they suggested changes and one in particular, was to use the west side of 12E only and that another interest study should be done in that area.

Matt said that the village's new sewer system is only at 38% capacity and they would welcome this project to help them.

Matt Cooper explained that there were several grants the town is in good position to be awarded. He said the project would then be 75% funded. He gave a figure, per property of \$283.00, or \$24.00 per month. He also explained that the sewer fees will depend on what the Village will charge the town. He said that it is typically determined by the water usage. So, the number of gallons of water you use would, whether it goes down the drain or on the lawn, be how they calculate the sewer charge.

Matt explained the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) fees, stating that this is required for pump replacements, etc.

Matt said that the last interest survey showed a 53% favorability rate for the lower rates. He then explained the steps needed to move forward with the project. He said that this is a very unique time in funding.

Supervisor Aubertine then opened the floor for questions.

Jim Bono – Jim explained that he is part owner of three trailer parks, which would be a total of 162 EDU's. He said that the district would not be affordable for the residents in his parks.

Jim gave a list of 20 questions to Matt and said they did not need to be addressed at the meeting but would like them answered at some point.

Jim asked why the project is only for the West side, he asked who would be responsible for winterizing the hook ups and check valves. He asked if seasonal residents would receive a discount. Jim said that National Grid can't supply the electricity for this without upgrades and he wanted to know who would pay for that. Jim said that he is very concerned and wants to know why the board is looking into creating a sewer district. Jim said that he will pay 3 million in fees in 30 years.

Supervisor Aubertine said that as for the question of why, the board wanted to do a feasibility study, which lead to where they are now.

Matt told Jim that electric upgrades are included in the project costs. Jim said that some residents only have 30-amp service and will need their service upgraded. Matt said that this was part of the project.

Matt said that this will be a turn key project.

John Warneck-John asked if the power point presentation would be made available on the website and suggested that the questions that were presented and the answers also be posted on the website. He asked Matt how they handle outbuildings and how much more it would cost for these.

John Mason – John asked if the district would go to the town line and he wondered why the parks have to pay but the prison doesn't. John said that the district would be a double whammy for him as he owns property on the east side.

Matt explained the project would include those parcels on the east side from the village limits. John asked him where they would jump to the west side, he said that he would like a copy of the survey. John said that he waters his gardens and asked if there were any provisions being made for this. He also discussed the prison and park population, and said they were used for securing the grants.

Gary Beaton-Gary said that they have their septic system tested and inspected every year. He said that in the last 45 years of having it inspected he has never had a violation; he said that they have never been shut down.

Gary said if the system isn't broke, why fix it? He asked what are we doing? Gary said that if they district goes through, he will be out of business

Michael Docteur – Mike thanked the board and the engineers for holding the Q & A. He said he wondered why the board was looking into this when they were never approached with a petition for a sewer district. He said that he worked on water district #1 and that the people paid for every bit of it with their own money, there were no grants.

Mike talked about the aquifer by Frontenac Crystal Springs and the amount of water produced every day from it. He said that that water source is there and he would like to see the engineer work on that to get everyone water.

Mike asked if he wasn't willing to sign an easement was the town prepared to take the property through eminent domain.

Joe McCabe – Joe asked what size discharge lines would be used. He asked if he leaves for a week, will the system drain back and should he disconnect the system if he is going to be gone. Joe also asked about decommissioning the resident's current system.

David Powers said that he would be able to leave, the sewer system would be fine, and that the project will pay for decommissioning of the old systems.

Silke Ernisse – Silke said that she was glad the sewer project is proposed. She said that they are having difficulties with their current septic system. Silke said that she feels this is an environmental concern and she is for the project.

John Becker – John said he understood the line would go to the village sewer treatment plant and he asked about the capacity of the existing treatment plant and would they need to add onto this.

David Powers said that the village's system functional limit would not be exceeded. He said that if this became a problem, the DEC would put them on notice.

John asked who would be in control of the check valves, and Matt told him it would be the town. John also asked about the petition process.

Todd Beaton – Todd gave the board members a handout of 36 questions he had prepared for them. He said that he would like them all answered. Todd reviewed his questions.

Steve Schirano – Steve asked if the residents would be forced to hook up to the sewer.

Supervisor Aubertine told him no, but they would have to pay a debt service. He said that he does not want to hook up. He asked about the referendum process and who would be able to vote.

Matt said that every resident whose name appears on the deed would be able to vote, he explained that eligible voters would have to have their names on the deed.

Deb Homer – Deb said that she understands that the trailer park owners own the land. She also asked if the proposed fees would include the hook up.

Matt told her it would.

Donna Barravechia – Donna said that she felt there are a lot of retired residents who are on a fixed income. She feels the fees are a bit hard to swallow.

Roger Williams – Roger said that he has a vacant lot, and wondered if he would be charged. The board explained to him that he would be charged a half EDU for a curb stop and a quarter EDU if the line just runs on his property. Roger said that going forward, if he does not hook up now, he would have to pay for the installation after the district is formed. Supervisor Aubertine told him that was correct, he would have to pay then.

David Powers explained that the sewer laws would mimic the town's water law.

Supervisor Aubertine thanked everyone for attending, and he told them how much he appreciated their participation.

He said that they are in a holding pattern now, and won't be moving forward with any actions this evening. He said that if they are moving forward there will be more meetings. He reminded everyone this is just a proposal.

Ann Levy – Ann said that if there are no grant funds it would make the project even higher.

Supervisor Aubertine told her that they are 1-2 years out with this project.

Councilman Wood said that they would have to have the vote before a single dime could be spent.

Supervisor Aubertine made a motion to adjourn the Q & A session at 7:46pm.

Michelle Bouchard, RMC – Town Clerk