

Questions & Answers February 18, 2009

The following is presented as an effort to educate and respond to questions concerning the on-going sewer project. Statements and figures listed are for informational purposes only and do not constitute notification of assessments, interest rates or user fees. Additionally, the timeframes discussed are provided to give the residents an idea of when their areas will be under construction but are subject to change. In the event there is a change in schedule, we will do our best to notify all those involved. Thank you for your continued patience as we work to improve the town's infrastructure, assist our neighbors with failing systems while protecting our environment.

Q – On Middle Street near St. Paul's Church, why wouldn't the sewerage go down the hill? Does it go down St. Paul Street into Blackstone, Massachusetts or up to Slatersville?

A – If you live by St. Paul's Church, it doesn't go into Blackstone, it would go up into Colerick area and then down and ties into a manhole on Liz Development and then enters into the Woonsocket system that way.

Q – How come we had to have pumps when gravity would handle it?

A – Because being at a higher elevation than Liz Development but then it goes down to a low point and then back up to Liz Development. So it has to be pumped. They looked (the engineers) at that area and to do a conventional gravity system, but it would all flow down to the St. Paul area and then one large pump station would have pumped it back up into the Liz Development area.

Q – Why are some people who have older homes on Elizabeth Avenue and who were assessed at \$5,200.00 and does not have a pump in the Liz Development area?

A – Because it was a private developer, he gave the older homes the option to tie in and provided connections for some of the existing homes in that area where he had passed and because it was part of a private development on that project. That is why they are paying the sewer lot development fee of \$5,200.00 at that time. That project is separate and not part of the current project that is going on now. As opposed to the current sewer project going on in the town currently which is funded by a general obligation bond.

Q – What is the different between an inside E-1 grinder pump and an outside E-1 grinder pump?

A – If using an outside unit, the piping will intercept with the piping that leaves the house which either goes into a septic tank or a cesspool. With the outside unit, they would be able to intercept that at a given point wherever it is on the property, it would flow into this tank where it would then be pump with the low pressure line to the street and then into the network. Most residents go with the outside units.

For an inside unit, it may require additional plumbing and it does require a separate venting system and they must also have access to the outside stack of the residents home to abide by the plumbing codes. And they don't control that, it would be the plumbing codes that must be followed for installing an inside unit.

Q – How is the assessment determined?

A – The assessment has not yet been arrived at. Because it is a 3 phase process and there was a \$21,000,000 bond that was voted on and approved by the town residents of North Smithfield on October 16, 2007, the final amount has yet to be determined.

Upon Phase 1's completion, there will be funds that will begin to be paid back. At that time, all those residents in Phase 1, and those connections will be divided up by the actual costs and then divided by the number of users. At that time, it would be considered just a temporary assessment.

Upon completion in Phase 2, the total costs will be taken into account of Phases 1 and 2 and that will be divided in the same way with the total number of users in both Phase 1 and 2 and that will be a new assessment. Anything that was paid in Phase 1, for those users will be deducted from the new temporary assessment. Upon completion in Phase 3, a final assessment will then be divided out among all users at that time and adjustments will be made at that time. Any monies that have been paid toward the temporary assessments will ultimately be deducted from the final assessment.

Q – What would the cost be for a sewer assessment for a duplex?

A – According to the town ordinance, Section 8-35.5 (d)

1 Unit	= 1	edu = equivalent dwelling unit
2 – 3 Units	= 1.5	edu's
4 – 10 Units	= 2	edu's

Q – How many households are affected in Phase 1A?

A – There are a total number of 100 units.

Q – Why was the referenda on October 16, 2007 voted on by the entire town and why isn't the entire town paying for it?

A – The \$21,000,000 bond is a general obligation bond. General obligation bonds are bonds that are voted by and passed by the majority of registered voters. There were several communications placed in local newspapers before the election explaining exactly what the question was about and how it affected only those users who will be required to pay the funds back to the town.

Q – What is the difference between a user fee and an assessment?

A – The difference is that an assessment is to pay the capital that is paid over a 20 year period of time. A sewer user fee is a fee that funds the operational and system maintenance budget

Q – How much will it cost to go from the street to the property per foot and why wasn't that price included in the bond total?

A – The plumber or drainlayer will provide that price to the homeowner. Also, the SRF fund program will not allow the funding to be used to pay anything on private property.

Q – When is the sewer installation scheduled for Lincoln Drive?

A – That area is in Phase 2 of the project. As of February, it is in its final design and it will be submitted to DEM at the end of February for their approval and will be going out to bids probably by the middle of March. Mr. Geremia will award the contract at the May 1st council meeting. Construction may begin in Phase 2 approximately in the middle of May, 2009.

Q – When will Great Road be repaved?

A – Once all sewers have been connected and because Great Road is a State road, they will have to go into a little more detail. They have to place asphalt down to the depth it was previously and also include concrete base, grind and overlay the road, install drains and that will be done in the middle of the summer. It will approximately be repaved by the middle or towards the end of the summer.

Q – Will letters go out to Lincoln Drive?

A – Once the final design is complete and the contract has gone out to bid, correspondence will be mailed out to those homeowners who will be affected from the engineering office informing residents to begin to think about where they would want their connection to be. The homeowner will be asked to either return a post card directly or if they need to consult with the engineer ahead of time, the engineer will meet with them and discuss various options and he will guide them (the homeowner) through the process.

Q – Are there any hardship cases?

A – The ordinance does allow for individuals to present a hardship case and there are provisions in the ordinance. The Town of North Smithfield is applying for is a Sewer Tie-In Loan Fund. It is administered through the State Revolving Loan program. The Town of North Smithfield has applied for that on the residents behalf. It is a fixed 2% interest loan paid over a period of 5 years and the maximum amount is \$10,000.00. There is no restriction on income. Once the program is set up, the homeowner will apply to the town and the town will certify that the homeowner is in that project area and RI Housing will administer the program.

Q – What is the time frame for a homeowner to connect?

A – The homeowner has one (1) year from the date that they receive the letter saying that the system is ready to support them and have one (1) year to hook up or begin the appeal process.

Q – Does the sewer commission recommend any particular company to be the drainlayer?

A – No recommendation will be made by the commission one way or the other. There is a list available at the Municipal Annex in the town clerks office along with the Sewer Superintendent at Water and Sewer Department and a list is also published on the town's website at Nsmithfieldri.org.

NOTE: Any master plumber is capable of doing the same work as a drainlayer. But the master plumber can do both the interior and exterior work, a drainlayer only does the exterior or outside work .

The drainlayer or master plumber will contact the sewer superintendent Mr. Alvarez when he pulls the permit.

Q – As far as the warranty on the grinder pump, when will it be inspected, after it has been installed?

A – It will be inspected three times. It will be inspected by Mr. Alvarez, the sewer superintendent from the town, the town electrical inspector and then the manufacturer will come out and certify that the installation has been installed and is in accordance with their requirements and everything is functioning properly, at that time the warranty begins. There will be a sign off at that time and the homeowners will be given and O & M (Operating and Maintenance Manual) and given a certificate that the installation has been accomplished and completed.

Q – When hiring a drainlayer, do they have to be licensed by the Town of North Smithfield and does a master plumber have to be licensed by the town also?

A – Yes, a drainlayer has to be licensed with the Town of North Smithfield. A master plumber does not because a master plumber has a State license through the State of Rhode Island and that would cover them to do work within the Town of North Smithfield and throughout Rhode Island.

Q – What happens if the sewer backs up or doesn't work properly, who would be responsible, the homeowner or the town?

A – There are two check valves at the line. There is one at the property line and one located at the pump. No sewerage would enter the basement or the home in any way and this prevents that from happening. There are cleanouts within the system not directly from the property. The homeowner would be responsible from where it leaves the house to the connection in the street. The main line in the street, is the towns responsibility to maintain that and there are flushing or cleanouts that occur throughout the system, they will periodically be flushed and maintained.

Q – Will all single homes be paying the same dollar amount on the user fees?

A – Yes.

Q – Is the pump going to be below the frost line?

A – Yes

Q- How long must the cords be?

A – There are 50 ft. and 75 ft. cords available. The cords are not to be cut by the homeowners, drainlayer or master plumber. Inform the drainlayer to return the cords and if a longer cord is needed, the town will supply to them a longer cord if need be. The cord is very easy to disconnect and it will be replaced by the homeowner's, drainlayer or master plumber.

Q – What is the worst scenario if a homeowner is unable to tie in?

A – There are provisions in the ordinance for hardships and appeals for the hook up and annual user fee. The assessment fee is still payable over the 20 year period. The resident would present their case before the sewer commission who would then make a recommendation to the town council and it would be the council's decision if they would grant a full, partial waiver. If the waiver is granted, mostly likely there would be a lien placed on the home.

Q – If there is ledge in one particular area or phase, will the resident be responsible for any additional costs for laying those lines in anyway?

A – No. Because all 3 phases are being considered as one project and that is why we are utilizing the economies of scale. The more residents connecting, the likelihood that the amount maybe less. If there is additional ledge on one street more than another, the resident will not bear any additional costs.

Q – How deep does the pipe have to be in the ground.

A – 4 feet

Q – Why wasn't a pumping station built?

A – When they (engineering company) evaluated the cost of pumping, it was presented to the sewer commission the additional costs for ledge removal. When the preliminary estimates were being done for the cost of the projects and 100 homes were being affected, there was an additional \$1,000,000 of ledge if they had gotten to the depth necessary for a gravity system. The \$1,000,000 would include the removal of the ledge and the cost of a pumping station. That would equal out to an additional \$10,000 per homeowner. Mr. Geremia presented preliminary costs to the commission and the commission made the decision for the benefit of the community to put in low pressure sewers for the short and long term and providing the homeowner with the pump. That would be cheaper and save the homeowner \$10,000 over a period of 20 years. That is why and how it was decided.

Q – What happens if you have a new septic system?

A – The ordinance has provision if a resident had an approved septic system put in over the last 5 years, then the homeowner would need to show evidence and verify that the system is operating properly and if the house was sold, it would have to be connected to the sewers. Refer to 8-35.5C to Future Assessment and dealing with a new septic system in the ordinance.

Q – How much is the permit application fee?

A – It is \$200 per unit.

Q – How much is a drainlayers permit?

A – The fee is \$50 for the permit.

Q – When is phase 1 scheduled to be complete?

A – The contractor should be finished phase 1 by June 1, 2009 unless the contractor experiences some underlying issues, he then may request for an extension through the town engineer and the sewer commission.

Q – What is the reason why residents only have one (1) year to tie into the sewer system?

A – The reason only for one (1) is because that is what the sewer ordinance states and is based on the SRF money. The ordinance has been enforced for decades.

Q – Why does the existing septic systems have to be filled in?

A – Because it is illegal to continue using and having an existing septic system by DEM requirements and still be connected to a sewer system.

Q – When those properties have connected to the sewers, will taxes increase?

A – Connection to public sewers does increase the value of your home. However, with the number of connections and the overall increase in value throughout the community it is anticipated any increase would be negligible.