

DRAFT
TOWN OF OLD SAYBROOK
WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY
302 MAIN STREET
OLD SAYBROOK, CT 06475-2369

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES: Oyster River East Public Education

Thursday, February 26, 2009

The Town of Old Saybrook Water Pollution Control Authority met on Thursday, February 26, 2009, in the Pasbeshauke Pavilion at Saybrook Point Park, College Street Extension, Old Saybrook, CT to conduct a Public Education Session for the neighborhood of Oyster River East.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Pavel Wilson at 7:00PM.

II. Introduction of WPCA and Staff

Pavel Wilson, George Gwizd, Elsa Payne, and John Claffey were present. Also in attendance were; Don Lucas, WPCA Coordinator, Robbie Marshall, WPCA Info. Specialist, and members of the public.

III. Public Information Session for Saybrook Acres

IV. Questions and Answers

Q: How were the AT lots determined? A: The DEP and the Town engineer toured the 15 areas and determined which lots would require AT systems due to their proximity to water. In this area only waterfront lots were designated AT. The rest of the lots will remain what they are; they will not be changed to AT due to small lot size like other areas in the Wastewater Management District.

Q: Does the homeowner decide who does the work? A: The Town is trying to achieve economy of scale by designing the systems and putting a block of properties out for bid to choose the best price. Most likely the contractors will all be from the area and they will be licensed and trained. A homeowner can choose their own contractor if they are on the approved list.

Q: Has anyone actually gone out and observed what the systems are doing? A: Yes over the years they have been monitored. A: We had to make some concessions during mediation. There was a discussion about meeting requirements and groundwater pollution. The State says the Town is polluting.

Q: The Town is trying to cover 50% of the cost and there will be 2% loans available. A: The Clean Water Fund is expected to pay for 25% of the costs and the Town will provide the other 25%. A: There is also a Small Cities Grant available for repairing septic systems. It is town-wide and is up and running now.

Q: Is the 2% loan for everyone? A: Yes. Everyone qualifies for the 20-year 2% loan.

Q: When will work begin on my lot? A: Probably the third quarter of next year.

Q: Is one of those alternative treatment systems going to be in my yard? A: You have good separation to groundwater distance. You shouldn't have anything showing above

grade. There will just be a small 18 or 24" manhole cover. This situation will occur when the system needs to be raised, like in the beach area. We have started researching and speaking to vendors. We prefer simpler, more aesthetic systems. Some are recirculating with pumps and cycle timing. That will be covered by monitoring.

Q: We are attempting to do something unprecedented in the State of CT so what guarantee is there, that there won't be more changes down the line? A: Once we implement the program the DEP will become involved with another town. This is part of their program to alleviate the nitrogen going into the Sound. They are buying into our plan that this is going to work. But there have been AT systems installed for many years on Cape Cod (1400), Rhode Island, New Jersey and other coastal areas. We have been researching which systems work and which are good for seasonal properties.

Q: Will all the dry wells become obsolete and be replaced by leaching fields? A: Some of the areas have significant depth to groundwater, so they won't have to come out. Q: Does the cost include removing the dry well? A: Yes.

Q: If you're a yellow lot is it safe to say it won't turn blue? A: Yes.

There were questions on individual lots and what kind of upgrades would be necessary.

Q: How would the upgrades impact the landscaping? A: In areas with larger lots we have more leeway on where to place the systems. The old tanks are crushed and left in the ground.

Q: Will Fuss & O'Neill be doing the engineering? A: We are trying to do as much as possible in-house.

Q: Will there will be soil testing? A: There might be. We can test right at the edge of the property with an auger and you wouldn't even know we were there.

There was a discussion on tidal impacts on groundwater levels and monitoring well samples. The groundwater only rises about 3 inches.

Q: You said there will be a referendum in August, what happens if it doesn't pass? A: There is a very high probability that the DEP will take us back to court and order the installation of the sewer system and central treatment plant. Q: Will Westbrook and Clinton hook up? A: The tri-town treatment plant has been taken off the table, if there is a plant, it will be our plant.

Q: Why does a lot need a tank but not leaching? A: The leaching may have been repaired, but the original tank is still in place.

There was a discussion on the location of the 5 groundwater monitoring wells, groundwater elevation, and leaching systems on certain lots.

Q: Can we call the office and have someone look at our lots? A: This will happen after the vote. If time permits, call and the Coordinator will go look at the property.

Q: What makes some lots upgrade compliant? A: They had a new tank and leaching system installed. Q: After what year is the tank considered new? A: After 1988 the tanks became 2-compartment.

Q: Is the sizing of the system still a function of the bedrooms? A: Yes. It depends on the number of bedrooms.

Q: In talking to the people on the Cape has there been any ability to not buy a whole new system, like a retrofit, in order meet the 50% nitrogen removal? A: If you have a 2-compartment tank you could probably make it work. There was a description of how the advanced treatment systems work.

Q: Could we be assured that farm animals and other issues that impact nitrogen along the Oyster River will be addressed? A: The program includes nitrogen removal and in subsequent years items like nitrogen control in fertilizers will be addressed, whether it will be mandatory or voluntary.

Q: Will we be educated enough to make this vote? There have been some votes that have not gone quite right. A: One of the issues we're facing as the WPCA, is that if you have a vocal element in one of the beach associations, that can be enough to sway the vote. Regardless of the choice that is made (\$40 million or the \$70 million), and where you live, everyone is going to be paying something. Part of the issue is to get people outside the Wastewater Management District educated; just because we are not going to be on your property doesn't mean we're not going to be in your wallet. A: What we need to get across is that if it becomes a sewer treatment plant, then the 1900 dwelling units becomes 2500 units because the pipe will go down Route 1 or Main Street will hook up those properties. Other properties will pay a non-user fee because they can only be assessed a certain amount of money, the value derived from the benefit of hook up. If they can only be assessed \$15,000 then the non-users will have to pay the remainder. So we need people that understand it, to come out and vote.

Through the negotiation, the number of parcels has come down from about 2500 to 1900. Through design of the systems, the WPCA staff will try to keep the costs down.

There was a discussion about large DEP systems (over 5000 gallons per day.)

Q: As it gets closer to the vote will there be an effort to lay out the issues; pros and cons; mail to the house so that people understand the issue. A: Right now the public hearing is scheduled for June 17th, followed by a town meeting, and then the vote. There will be a town mailing; Robbie is on top of that. A: I am also a proponent of going house-to-house; we have done that with the flyers.

Q: The 15 focus areas don't cover all the waterfront in Old Saybrook. A: The question always comes up and there is the feeling that some areas have escaped. The reason is because a prior town official invited the DEP down saying we got pollution. They did some studies and these are the areas they came up with. A: In the December newsletter there is the whole history of the study areas. A: In order to access Clean Water Funds you need to have a documented pollution problem and a study that the DEP agrees with. That is the Facilities Plan we refer to. These 15 focus areas meet that. We could say include all of Old Saybrook, but you have no Clean Water Fund because you have no engineering plan. So then the money comes out of our pocket.

The meeting ended at 8:30PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Old Saybrook Water Pollution Control Authority

Robbie A. Marshall
WPCA Recording Clerk