

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

**Meadowood Public Education Session**

Wednesday, March 4, 2009

The Town of Old Saybrook Water Pollution Control Authority met on Wednesday, March 4, 2009, in the Acton Public Library, 60 Old Boston Post Road, Old Saybrook, CT to conduct a Public Education Session for the neighborhood of Meadowood.

**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, Don Lucas, WPCA Coordinator, Robbie Marshall, WPCA Info. Specialist, and members of the public were in attendance.

**III. Public Information Session for Meadowood: Video and PowerPoint**

**IV. Questions and Answers**

Q: Suppose the lot is coded in gray and the property owner doesn't have any more information to give you. What do you do then? A: It depends on what we know about your neighborhood. If we have groundwater data from lots around you we can make some assumptions and develop some baseline data. When you start a repair you start with the depth to groundwater. If we don't have any information, we take a soil sample and determine the depth from that. A: If your tank is older than 1988 you will need a new tank. Everything prior to then was single compartment. The upgrade standards are requiring a 2-compartment tank. The homes in Meadowood were built in the 60's. The tank sizes were 750 and 900, the smallest tank now is a 1000 gallon. We can usually get the tank size from the pumpout tickets – if the pumper consistently pumps the same amount of gallons.

Q: Will the research on the property take place before or after the referendum? A: After.

Q: So the determination on what will be needed on the property won't be made until the property owner is asked to vote? A: More than likely. A: We are advocating a decentralized system; where the solution will be on individual lots. It will cost \$30,000 to hook up to a central plant. The costs are considerably less than hooking up to a central sewer.

Q: Meadowood was never included when this first started. A: It wasn't included in the original study. It was added in the 80's.

Discussion on gray properties continued. They will most likely be “yellow”, meaning the property will need new tank and leaching, replace the old single compartment, small tanks and the old dry wells with leach fields.

Q: Why would it be a town-wide referendum? How does it affect the rest of the town?

A: The town has been paying for the studies over the years to get us to this point. They will also be paying for the 25% in services.

If the referendum doesn't pass the focus areas will hook up to a sewer plant, but it will no longer be just the 1900 properties. It will include any properties the pipe passes along the way to the plant, approximately 600 more.

Q: What kind of information produced the colors on the maps? A: We looked through the files in Town Hall to see if there were any upgrades made to the system. Or if there was a map or any information like groundwater data (test hole) in the file.

Q: How long have we been advocating 2-compartment tanks? A: We didn't have the mediated agreement until the end of 2005. The Health District is aware of the areas in the wastewater management district and would advise you on what is coming.

Q: My property is yellow and I pump out and don't have a problem. I feel like we're being discriminated against. A: You wouldn't know you had a problem, unless it was backing up into the house but we have these permeable soils and systems that don't treat the wastewater properly so we're contaminating the groundwater. We are approaching this differently than we should be. We should be trying to educate everybody about the environmental impacts. In Anne Arundel County they have done a tremendous job in educating the population and they are clamoring to get their water cleaned up because they are a high tourist area. Well we have tourists here and we should be cleaning it up.

Q: How sound is the funding policy? A: They have told us that they have set the money aside for the next 2 years. A: From my understanding it gets bonded \$40 million and we don't have to worry about it. Plus the Clean Water Fund comes from the Federal government.

Q: Every year we have to pay \$500-800 for O & M? A: No. That's only for advanced treatment systems. If you have a conventional septic system you just have to pump it out every 5-years.

Q: When it comes time to do the work it's the homeowner's choice? A: What we'd like to do to achieve some kind of economy of scale; to have a contractor go through the neighborhood and bid. If you choose not to use the same contractor, you don't have to, but they need to be on an approved list.

There was a discussion about drywells versus leaching fields and a description of a septic tank and how the system works.

Q: What happens if you sell your house before they get around to the upgrades? Do you have to repair the system? A: No. Massachusetts has a Title V program in which the septic system must be brought up to grade upon the sale of the house. We suggested that approach with the DEP but they said it would take too long to replace all the substandard systems. So you don't have to upgrade if you sell your house. We have set up a meeting with the board of Realtors and will discuss the program with them. It also depends on the lending institution, buyer, and seller. It you need to

upgrade your system now, the Health District is aware of the guidelines and will make sure you will be in compliance.

Q: What happens if the vote doesn't pass? A: The DEP has said this is your one shot to put the plan in place. They could go back to court and say the WPCA didn't present a plan that will work and the Town didn't accept it, and then ask the Judge to order that the sewer system be installed. A: In order to make the system costs as low as possible the pipe would pick up the commercial properties on Route 1 and Main Street. But that also lowers the constraints on what can be done on Route 1. The fact that we don't have a sewer system helps with our slow growth initiative.

There was a discussion about the concept of "benefit assessment", in which a property can only be assessed the amount of benefit derived from a sewer system. The rest must be put on the Town tax rolls.

Q: Does the rest of the Town know this? If they did they wouldn't vote it down. A: That is the bottom line and we need the word spread. We not only have planned meetings for the focus areas but will set one up for the rest of the Town. Property owners outside of the Wastewater Management District will be affected in the pocketbook, but not on their property. Those in the District will be affected both in their pocketbook and on their property. We are trying to give people in the focus areas a better idea of what will occur on their property. But either the Town will pay \$40 million for the decentralized approach or \$70 million for the sewers and plant.

We are a "Sewer Avoidance" committee because the last vote in Town rejected a sewer treatment plant. Shortly after that the WPCA was formed.

Q: I think the wording of the referendum is critical. A: Our attorney is working on it right now. We will have a public hearing in June on the Facilities Plan and then a Town Meeting in July, and then the referendum in August. The Facilities Plan is in Town Hall and in the Library. The process has started and will continue at a meeting next Wednesday.

Q: What effect do the beach associations have? A: Every property owner has the right to vote. One of the concerns is that the beach associations pack the house and drive the vote. We are trying to make these sessions available to all of the public.

Q: If a property owner comes up with more information on their lot, to whom should it be presented. A: To the WPCA Coordinator, Don Lucas.

There was a discussion on the costs of a sewer treatment plant, operation and maintenance, and benefit assessment.

Q: But the rest of the Town doesn't pay anything. A: The rest of the Town is responsible for the 25% in services.

Q: How much land do you need for a sewer treatment plant? A: Two to five acres.

Q: Is it recommended to upgrade the property now rather than wait? A: It is better to wait if you can, because you cannot tap into the financing plan until the referendum is passed. A: However the Town has received a \$300,000 Small Cities Grant which is income dependent. But it is Town-wide and the no-interest loan is not repayable until the house changes title.

There was a discussion on where the treatment plant would be located and the use of eminent domain in order to site one.

Q: Based on the year the houses in Meadowood were built is it safe to say that most of the gray lots will need new tanks and leaching? A: Yes.

Q: What is the purpose of the 2-compartment tank? A: The second chamber goes out to the leaching field, so you want it to be as clean as possible, without any solids or grease. The first compartment has three levels. It allows the grease to rise to the surface. The solids drop to the bottom. The upper layer captures the scum layer. The clarified liquid goes through the middle. If anything goes through, it will be captured in the filter.

There was a discussion on septic tank additives which should not be used because they can ruin the leach field. They break up the grease, but then it goes out to the leaching area and clogs it up.

There was a discussion about pollution and going back to court. The Town has gone to court twice and lost. The Facilities Plan has the results of ten years of groundwater sampling of 85 microwells which shows ammonia and other evidence of human activity. The State legislature has invested the DEP Commissioner with the power to tell a municipality that they are polluting (or even the perception of pollution) and order them to abate it. Old Saybrook has been fined substantial penalties for nuisance polluting, which means they knew they were polluting but didn't do anything about it. The fine is now sitting on the shelf. If what we are advocating is voted down, the fine can come off the shelf and be applied. They can then fine us every day.

George Gwizd described the verdict and fines as passed down by Judge Frances Allen.

**The meeting ended at 8:38PM.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Old Saybrook Water Pollution Control Authority

*Robbie A. Marshall*  
WPCA Recording Clerk