



Town Council Meeting
December 10, 2020



The December 10, 2020 Special meeting of the Barnstable Town Council was physically closed to the public to avoid group congregation.

A quorum being duly present, President Hebert called the December 10, 2020 Town Council Special meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. from a remote location

An announcement was made by President Hebert regarding the special meeting being televised live and questioning if anyone was actively taping the session to please make their presence known. This session is recorded and broadcast on Channel 18.

PRESENT: (On Zoom) David Bogan, Kristine Clark, Jennifer Cullum, Debra Dagwan, Jessica Rapp Grasseti, Paul Hebert, Matthew Levesque, Paul Neary (7:15 PM), Paula Schnepf, Tracy Shaughnessy, Gordon Starr, Eric Steinhilber.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilor Atsalis and President Hebert asked to keep the families of Scott Dutra and Joseph Gentile, who passed away this week in our thoughts and prayers.

Financial Planning for the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan

- **Mark S. Ells, Town Manager**
- **Mark A. Milne, Director of Finance**

Mark Ells discussed long-term financial policy and the critical fiscal policy needed to accompany the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan. He noted the upcoming state review as well as the Cape Cod Commission's review on the Town's Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan. He spoke about the design, permit and construction of Phase I which would approximately cost \$20,000,000; sewer pipe in-ground by late spring 2021; and the sewer assessment ordinance language for the next Town Council meeting. He added there would be a new sewer website which is currently under development.

Mark Milne, Finance Director, shared his PowerPoint presentation and explained the special revenue fund balance of \$19,000,000, revenue for Fiscal Year and the project fund balance at the end of Fiscal Year. He discussed the 10-year projection for sewer construction, private way and improvement fund. He mentioned the importance of General Benefit Facilities (GBF) which will be allocated to a larger number of sewer units as they

serve a major part of the pumping district and the Specific Benefit Facilities (SBF) which will be allocated to direct property abutters.

Mark Milne, Finance Director discussed the need for decision points, they're impact, timeline and funding. He mentioned the pumping area served by the Vineyard Wind infrastructure installed route was a General Benefit Facility which ultimately service 2,000 parcels.

Mark Milne, Finance Director asked the Council to decide between the Sewer Assessment Amount or the General Fund Contribution. He talked about the impact to property owners and or the benefits for the property owners. He mentioned dollar cap, assessment connection cost and system development charge. He added benefits included cost avoidance for site pumping, and possible increase in market value of property. He explained the talking point dollar amount for sewer assessment was approximately \$17,000 per property. He spoke about including an interest rate (2 percent above the Town's borrowing rate for constructing the project), connection fee (\$1,600 one-time charged; adjusted annually) and a development charge.

He explained the three (3) approaches to the General fund Contribution which were: municipal purpose stabilization fund, debt exclusion override and the existing tax levy. He discussed benefits to the debt exclusion override approach: solidifies funding for first several years, preserves existing town services, favorable bond rating, and gradual increase to tax levy. He noted other funding to offset the impact which could include adjusting the residential exemption to offset the debt exclusion.

(Neary)

Reiterate the dollar amount: \$17,000 start up with \$1,600 connection fee and system development fee. Costs to properties vary in proximity as to where the sewer lines will be located.

(Ells)

The cost varies by property, septic in front or back of property. We need to look at the connection fee and this could be amortized over thirty (30) years. Need to look at topography and house by house case.

(Neary)

We need to be able to offer a cost range to help the property owners understand the full cost and get the total picture.

(Ells)

Our new website will be addressing these concerns and will provide as much information as possible.

(Neary)

Are there any grants or relief packages from the state available?

(Ells)

We are in discussions with state and federal regarding securing funding.

(Milne)

We can not unwind any assessment rather if there is funding it is possible to lower tax levy.

(Steinilber)

What is the timetable? Are we looking at 2022? What are the prioritized steps? We do not want a repeat of the failed 2006 debt service.

(Dagwan)

Can the property owners choose their own connection company?

(Ells)

Yes

(Cullum)

I have concerns about the communication factor. What happens if override fails?

(Ells)

If the debt service fails then we must look at reducing and or eliminating operating and capital services. This could be crippling losing services if the debt exclusion fails.

(Cullum)

Cornered with outreach need to make sure our communication is consistent and on message to residents and property owners.

(Ells)

We have hired two different public relations firms to develop website, and have community discussions. We need clear fiscal policy first.

(Steinhilber)

What about the property owners that have already done some work regarding septic or sewer? How do we reach them?

(Nober)

The Town cannot utilize public resource dollars on public ballot questions.

(Ells)

Thinking this is an extension for connection, looking at database first year to see where sewer project will go and what properties will it impact? Board of Health and the Department of Public Works will work together to identify properties. Homes with Title 5 have an issue as it does not remove the nitrogen.

(Schnepp)

What is the percentage needed to place a question on the ballot?

(Milne)

The question will need a 2/3 approval from Council to place question on the ballot, then the majority of the Barnstable voters to approve the debt service.

(Rapp Grassetti)

Will this be voted on this fiscal year? What is timing for placing debt exclusion on ballot question?

(Milne)

It depends on what Council decides whether one year from now or 2 years maximum.

(Rapp Grassetti)

Have other property owners connected to the sewer lines utilizing on their own contractors? Is there a mandatory timeframe to connect?

(Ells)

Board of Health could grant waivers for those that have not connected.

(Nober)

Ordinance could mandate a timeline will review with Board of Health.

(Rapp Grassetti)

What about failing systems and the timeline for sewer in those areas. What can be done?

(Ells)

We are looking at possible interim solutions.

(McLaughlin)

One possibility would be to find a mechanism for tight tanks. Department of Public Works would need to weigh-in on this idea/solution.

(Ells)

Board of Health chair would like to discuss future plans with home owners. Mark Ells mentioned he and Dan Santos, Public Works Director have been regulars at the Board of Health meetings and will continue to be so to help in any way,

(Clark)

Can the declining debt service and the new debt service offset each other?

(Milne)

The Cape Cod Tech debt is based on the percent of our enrollment at the school. The declining Barnstable student enrollment, and reduction in our costs might partially offset the debt service.

(Shaughnessy)

What is currently sewer? What are the fees? If home owners are over nitrogen levels what are the incentives to the owners to reduce their nitrogen overload?

(Ells)

Everything matters and the most effective solutions have an educational aspect. This helps everyone to understand and come up with ideas to solve the issues. This is a priority for the community. We need critical decisions from Council regarding the sewer assessment ordinance and whether to establish an annual adjustment dollar amount.

(Shaughnessy)

Support the \$17,000 dollar amount to connect to the Town's sewer lines.

(Bogan)

Agreed with Shaughnessy and feels \$17,000 is a responsible compromise.

(Neary)

Clarification is \$17,000 amount for home owners in sewer hookup process only and not a town wide dollar amount?

(Ells)

Yes, amount is not a town wide dollar amount.

(Neary)

Can there be a sliding scale for lower financial home owners?

(Nober)

There needs to be a uniform standard.

(Steinhilber)

\$17,000 is close to \$25,000 with all added costs should consider lowering \$20,000 connection to sewer dollars

(Neary)

Lowering sewer assessment what does that affect?

(Milne)

Lower sewer assessment would mean higher General Fund contribution.

(Ells)

To reiterate Phase I is a design phase everything is conceptual even the costs.

(Milne)

Agree to work within a range \$13,000 to \$17,000 on sewer assessment and add on system development and connection fee. Recommend rate for town of 2 percent plus borrowing cost for interest on assessments.

(Hebert)

Councilors are sensitive to the cost to our property owners. This is not an easy decision not an easy thing to do for all our residents.

(Levesque)

This is the right thing to do to maintain a livable place.

(Cullum)

Communication is very important the town is not trying to make money off our home owners.

(Ells)

There will be outreach to our local lenders. The implementation system development approval rate will be brought to the Town Manager around February/March 2021 by the Department of Public Works. This is \$1600 one-time fee.

(Milne)

The project cost could be different for each home. Recommendation is a fixed dollar amount adjusted annually.

(Rapp Grassetti)

Ballot question if it does not pass there will be serious cuts. There is a timing concern with regards to the ballot question.

(Cullum)

Support the ballot question. Need enough opportunity to get people to understand the importance of this project. 60 days to get ballot question is too short what about 2 years?

(Steinhilber)

Supports ballot question, timing is for spring 2022. Make sure civic associations are involved with educational component.

(Dagwan)

Very important decision please include channel 18 in communication to help educate the public on the debt override.

(Ells)

We will use all mechanisms to communicate what we are embarking on; we will address private roads as part of the plan. We cannot complete the plan without addressing private roads. We will develop a plan that engages all home owners and residents to understand the need for this project.

(Starr)

Title 5 is no longer an option as it does not meet the needs with regards to nitrogen levels.

(Shaughnessy)

Support recommendation on debt service.

(Atsalis)

People will be concerned about the cost we have a job to do to educate the public.

(Ells)

Mark Milne, Finance Director, and I are ready with the sewer ordinance for the first reading.

(Rapp Grassetti)

Will the costs be the same in 2 years?

(Milne)

Yes, we factored in for inflation in the pricing range.

ADJOURNMENT:

Upon a motion duly made and seconded it was

VOTED TO ADJOURN:

Adjourned at 9:50 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Janet E. Murphy

Assistant Town Clerk/Town of Barnstable

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: November 17, 2020