

Doylestown Township Public Water & Sewer Advisory Board

August 3, 2007

Response to Resident Questions

In response to the request from the Board of Supervisors, over fifty residents of Doylestown Township have submitted questions via email regarding the proposed ordinances pertaining to the provision of public sewers in Doylestown Township. The Public Water and Sewer Advisory Board (PW&SAB) has been asked to respond to these questions. The questions we have received to date have been very thoughtful and comprehensive and we appreciate the opportunity to respond to and address resident's concerns.

Since many of the questions are similar, we have grouped these questions for the purpose of providing a response. Some of the information responding to questions was included in the "Information Sheet" which was included in the letter to residents from the Chair of the Board of Supervisors, Ms. Barbara Lyons, and dated July 26, 2007.

Question 1. Is public water included in this proposal?

Response – No, public water is not being considered at this time and is not a part of the proposed ordinances.

Question 2. How were the cost estimates calculated?

Response - The average cost per dwelling unit was based on the public project cost, plus gravity laterals and grinder pumps, estimated for each study area divided by the total number of dwelling units in the respective area. It is not based on road frontage of the property. These estimates were provided in a feasibility study conducted by Carroll Engineering Corporation and reported in a letter dated September 13, 2006.

The public costs (not including gravity laterals or grinder pumps) include the costs for running sanitary sewer lines in the street, pavement restoration, pumping stations and upgrades to the waste water treatment plants to accommodate the increased flow resulting from this project. Gravity laterals and grinder pumps are private costs and one method or the other will be used to connect a property to the sanitary sewer line in the street.

The current average cost per dwelling estimates are as follows:

Study Area I: Dell Haven, Pebble Ridge, and Woodbridge areas (357)

Cost per dwelling unit	\$22,340
Tapping fee	<u>\$ 4,700</u>
Total per dwelling unit	\$27,040

Study Area II: Pebble Hill, Tabor and Tower Hill, Pheasant Run, Sugar Bottom, and Furlong areas (1422)

Cost per dwelling unit	\$23,590
Tapping fee	<u>\$ 4,700</u>
Total per dwelling unit	\$28,290

Study Area III: Turk Road between Wells Road and Neshaminy Creek, and Almshouse Road between Lower State Road and Militia Hill Road and a small portion of East Road near Rt. 202. (24)

Currently, costs are estimated to be similar to Area I

It is important to note that these estimates are the best estimates available without the benefit of final design and engineering. The design and engineering work will not start until after the Board of Supervisors has approved the proposed ordinances. The PW&SAB and the Board of Supervisors are continuing to investigate and evaluate with the engineers and the Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority ways to reduce the project costs. Once design and engineering is completed and bids are received, the Board of Supervisors will review these bids and accept or reject the proposed work.

The above average cost estimates are for the public work to be done plus the estimated costs for gravity laterals and grinder pumps. They do not include the cost associated with the on-site connection. These privately contracted costs include excavation for the lateral from the right-of-way to the residence connection point, pipe and abandonment of the current on-site septic system and other costs specific to the site.

Question 3. If my system is working properly, is it mandatory that I connect to the public sewer line in my street?

Response As currently proposed, a property would not be required to connect to the public sewer unless the property is sold or the current on-lot system fails, at which point, connection would be mandatory. Although connection to the system would not be mandatory, the resident would still be responsible for the public cost per dwelling unit (see response to Question 2), but not the tapping fee.

The estimated public cost per dwelling unit is as follows: Study Area I - \$20,880; Study Area II - \$22,120; and Study Area III – same as area I

Question 4. Do the Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority (BCWSA) water treatment plants have the capacity to handle the proposed increase in volume from the three proposed study areas?

Response – The BCWSA, which provides the sewage treatment facilities for Doylestown Township, will need to expand some of its current sewer treatment facilities in order to handle the increased flow from the proposed study areas. The costs associated with the expansion of the affected facilities have been included in the project cost estimates.

Question 5. If this work proceeds, what is the timing for completion of the project?

Response According to the BCWSA and engineers, the next steps are to complete sanitary system design, pump station design and waste water treatment plant upgrade designs permitting construction project bid and award and then actual construction. It is estimated that completion of all work will require up to 46 months from the time that the Board of Supervisors approve the proposed ordinances and the design work starts. However, as a sewer line extension is completed, residents on that extension may connect at that time. Thus, many residences may have the opportunity to connect in less than 46 months.

Question 6. What funding alternatives have been explored for the public sewer project? How will residents be assessed for the work? Has a municipal bond been considered? Have federal or state funds been requested? What about a 30-year bond?

Response – The PW&SAB has investigated and continues to investigate ways to lessen the financial burden on affected residents through low cost loans or other means. Our state representatives have been contacted regarding the possibility of receiving a state grant or other financing to help offset the costs of the project.

The situation for Doylestown Township is somewhat unique since we have contracted the BCWSA to treat our wastewater. As a result, the township is not able to raise funds through a bond as the system will be owned by the BCWSA.

The PW&SAB have held discussions with PENNVEST regarding availability of a low cost loan to fund the project. However, based on preliminary discussions, the prospect of PENNVEST funding does not look promising at this time. However, we will continue to discuss our project needs with PENNVEST

If the proposed ordinances are approved, the PW&SAB will focus on exploring funding alternatives for all residents.

Question 7. Is there a way to attach the assessment to the property (rather than the property owner) so that whoever owns the property will pay for the benefit over a longer period, e.g., over 30 years?

Response – Along with investigating alternative ways to finance the project, we are also looking at ways by which homeowner's payments may be extended and not result in additional personal debt, per se, although there will still be a financial obligation linked to the property. At this point, it is not clear if this will be feasible.

Question 8. Will elderly or other individuals with fixed incomes or limited financial resources be forced from their homes due to this new financial burden?

Response – The Township, on a case-by-case basis, will review legitimate hardship cases.

Question 9. My current septic system/sand mound is only two years old and functioning well. Will I still be required to connect to the sewer system?

Response – As long as the current on-lot system is functioning properly and the property is not sold, you will not need to connect. However, you will still be responsible for the public cost of the project without the tapping fee (see response to Question 2, above).

Question 10. What happens if the public sewer project is approved but my system fails between that time and the completion of the extension to my property? What happens if my current on-lot system is malfunctioning?

Response – On-lot system failures and needed remedies will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by the Bucks County Board of Health. They will work with the home owner to develop the most effective and least expensive interim repair for the system until connection can be accomplished.

Question 11. Will the current septage management program requiring periodic septic tank pumping and well water testing continue if the public sewer system is adopted?

Response – Yes, the septage management program will continue for all properties not connected to public sewers. This continues so that when systems which were working properly initially fail, this can be detected and connection be implemented. Additionally, we would encourage periodic well water testing for all properties, those connected to public sewers and those with on-lot systems, since contamination of a well could be coming from an adjacent property

Question 12. What happens to my old on-lot system/sand mound if I connect to the public sewer?

Response – The existing on-lot system must be properly closed down. Tanks can be removed after pumping, crushed in place and covered with clean fill, or pumped and filled. Piping associated with drain fields may be left in place and sand mounds may be left in place.

Question 13. Many of the emails questioned whether a specific property was included in the proposed study areas and thus whether they were to receive public sewers in their street.

Response – We are providing a better map of the township and the affected areas elsewhere on this website. Please refer to this map to determine if your property is included. In addition, there is a large map of the township and proposed project areas posted in the Township Building. Also, note that the letter sent on July 26, 2007 was sent to all residences affected by the proposed ordinances.

Question 14. What type of sewer collection system is being proposed?

Response – In the feasibility study conducted by Carroll Engineering Corporation, they have proposed a system that utilizes gravity laterals as well grinder pumps. The PW&SAB will continue to work with the engineers and the BCWSA to investigate the proper mix of gravity laterals and grinder pumps to be used in the design phase.