

2012 ANNUAL TOWN REPORT

REPORT OF THE WASTEWATER IMPLEMENTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Handling the town's wastewater is anticipated to be one of the largest investments made in the history of the town of Harwich. We are not unique as nearly every town on the Cape faces the same challenges created by overdevelopment using septic systems that allow too many nutrients (such as nitrogen and phosphorus) into our fragile watersheds and ponds causing dangerous effects of excess nutrients invading our estuaries, embayments and fresh water and thereby creating an unsustainable imbalance. The purpose for considering a conventional sewerage system is all about natural resource protection.

The Wastewater Implementation Advisory Committee (WIAC) was formed in the Spring of 2012 with the charge of advising the Board Of Selectmen (BOS) on the following 3 matters:

1. Establish a cost allocation policy for presentation to town meeting
 - a. Define options for paying the debt and Operations and Maintenance costs.
2. Explore potential funding sources
 - a. Including creating a comprehensive financial plan
3. Develop Organizational/management structure for the wastewater system
 - a. Develop a comprehensive plan for implementation

The Water Quality Management Task Force (WQTF) and Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) have been working together for years to come up with a Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) for the town, which recognizes the areas of greatest need and identifies how much and what part of town needs to be sewerage to bring this fragile balance back to our watersheds. Their work has been mostly technical and scientific to help solve the wastewater problem in town. The WIAC's job is to take their fine work and recommend how it should be financed and structured within town government.

The first Draft Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) has been completed and is scheduled for Public Hearing in January 2013, at which time the BOS will listen to public comment and determine if there are any revisions necessary before sending the Draft off to Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) for review and conditional approval.

Once the Final Draft CWMP is completed, our committee will have a better idea of the numbers with which to work in order to understand the full financial impact of wastewater treatment throughout the town of Harwich.

In actuality, this means understanding 3 different levels of the finance question:

1. Be certain we have the best estimates of all costs and there are no surprise costs for which contingencies have not been anticipated. This would include capital costs, operations and maintenance costs, individual resident's hookup costs, how to account for future development and zoning changes and the new costs associated with these, and so on.
2. Research all funding sources – Grants, bonds, low/no interest options, etc.
3. Determine Cost Allocation Options – Types of taxes; Fee options; Assessments; Betterments and other ways to fairly determine who pays for what.

Simultaneously, we will be researching the various ways Wastewater management structure is handled in different towns and what might make the most sense for Harwich. Examples include

having a Water and Sewer Department, which would simply be adding the wastewater aspect to the current Water Department; Creating a Department of Public Works, which would have a sewer department within it; Creating a new Water and Sewer District, which would have its own government structure and its own town meeting. All of these things have potential impact on the ways in which town taxpayers will pay for these services and ultimately how much they will pay.

Throughout this process, we will be reaching out to the public to make them aware of our options and create a good conversation with everyone that will help us determine the best recommendations for our town.

We expect that we will successfully write a Comprehensive Financial Plan and a Comprehensive Plan for Implementation before the end of 2013, at which point the Board of Selectmen will have our recommendations and our charge will be complete.

Respectfully Submitted
Ted Nelson – Chairman

Members:		Representing:
Hugh Drummond	-	Harwich Taxpayers Association
Danette Gonsalves	-	Water Quality Management Task Force
Ted Nelson	-	Board of Selectmen Appointment at Large
Val Peter	-	Citizens Advisory Committee
Bob Steiner	-	Board of Selectmen Appointment at Large
Allin Thompson	-	Harwich Water Department
XXXXX	-	Capital Outlay Committee
XXXXX	-	Harwich Chamber of Commerce
XXXXX	-	Board of Selectmen Appointment at Large

<u>Special Liaisons:</u>		
Noreen Donahue	-	Finance Committee
Larry Ballantine	-	Board of Selectmen