

Question #12.

“Shall the \$48,000,000 appropriation and bond authorization (less any grants expected to be received from the State of Connecticut Clean Water Fund) for the planning, design and construction of the South Street sewer treatment plant and pump station upgrades be approved?”

Background:

The Town of Ridgefield provides municipal wastewater collection and treatment services to three areas of town. Within the town government, the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) is responsible for the management and operation of the town’s wastewater facilities. As part of the WPCA operations, planning for the capital needs of the towns wastewater facilities has been underway for several years and upgrades are now being proposed with a funding approval referendum vote scheduled for November 2018.

What Needs to be Done?

The WPCA currently owns and operates two wastewater treatment facilities, the Route 7 Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF), built in 1985, and the South Street WWTF, last upgraded in 1990. Both facilities collect wastewater from their respective service areas, treat the collected flow, and discharge treated effluent to the headwaters of the Norwalk River. The town’s two treatment facilities provide a high level of treatment using biological and chemical treatment processes that operate continuously 24/7.

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) has imposed more Restrictive effluent phosphorus limits on the two WWTFs. To Select the most cost effective approach to meeting the new limits, the WPCA prepared a Wastewater Facilities Plan. The Facilities Plan recommended an upgrade project to cost-effectively upgrade the town’s wastewater facilities to meet the

town’s future needs, and to meet the more restrictive effluent phosphorus limits imposed by the DEEP.

The proposed upgrade does not increase the current treatment capacity.

The Recommended Wastewater Facilities Upgrade Project consists of consolidating the two WWTFs at the South Street WWTF, upgrading the South Street WWTF to meet the new effluent limits, and increasing the peak flow capacity of the South Street WWTF to accommodate the flow from the decommissioned Route 7 WWTF. The upgrade project will replace essentially all of the existing mechanical and electrical equipment at the South Street WWTF, improve the ability of the WWTF to remove nitrogen, and change the process used for phosphorus removal to meet the more stringent limits imposed by the DEEP. Consolidating the two WWTFs will involve construction of a pump station at the location of the existing Route 7 pump station, and construction of an approximately three-mile-long force main (a pressure sewer) to convey the collected wastewater from the Route 7 District to the South Street WWTF. Combining these two plants into one will result in significant long term savings and operational costs.

Why is it Needed?

There are two major drivers for this project. First, simply stated, the Towns existing wastewater facilities are aging with equipment that has exceeded its service life and in need of significant upgrades to provide reliable wastewater treatment service for the town for the next 20 years. The Route 7 WWTF is 33 years old, and the South Street WWTF has not been updated in 28 years, with parts of the facility dating back to 1970. The existing WWTF equipment was recognized to have exceeded its service life, and planning for the needed upgrades of the equipment was completed as part of the Facilities Plan

Second, the project is required to upgrade the existing treatment process to meet new stringent effluent limits. The DEEP has imposed mandated reductions in the amount of phosphorus allowed to be discharged by wastewater treatment plants. Reduced phosphorus and nitrogen levels will improve the quality of effluent released into the Norwalk River.

What will the Project Cost?

The current total project estimated cost is \$48 million. Construction of the Project will be competitively bid to select a contractor to build the upgrade.

In order to qualify for all state grants and minimize costs to our tax payers, the state has required that we meet their timeline. Approval of this referendum allows us to meet that timeline.

How will the Project be Paid for?

The WPCA is eligible for funding assistance for this project from the DEEP under the Clean Water Fund. The costs for the portion of the project that is related to providing nitrogen removal is eligible for a 30% grant, and the costs for the phosphorus removal portion of the project is eligible for a 50% grant. The 50% Grant Program is a one-time program that has a schedule requirement that the construction contract be signed by July 1, 2019. The DEEP offers the town several funding assistance sources, and all eligible project costs will receive 20% grant assistance, with the balance of the costs funded with a low interest loan of (2%). These grant funding programs are estimated to cover about \$11.5 million of the \$48 million estimated total project cost.

The balance of the cost will be funded by a combination of a portion on the general tax base, a portion paid for

by the sewer users, and a portion paid by septage dumping fees. The approach is similar to the funding program that was implemented to fund the last major upgrade of the South Street WWTF nearly 30 years ago.

The WPCA has engaged a firm specializing in capital project rate studies to develop a rate structure that will gradually increase the rates to the sewer users over multiple years.

When will the Project be Constructed?

The Project is presently in the design phase, and the current project schedule calls for advertising the project for construction bids in the spring of 2019, with execution of the construction contract for the Wastewater Facilities Upgrade to be completed by July, 2019 to comply with the DEEP 50% phosphorus grant funding assistance program. The WPCA anticipates completion of the project in 2022.

Does the Project Increase Treatment Capacity?

No. During the Facilities Plan, a buildout analysis for Sewer District 1 was completed. This concluded that the existing South Street WWTF capacity of 1.0 MGD (million gallons per day) could accommodate the anticipated growth within Sewer District 1 for the next 20 years. The upgraded WWTF total capacity of 1.12 MGD represents the addition of .12 MGD from the decommissioned Route 7 WWTF serving Sewer District 2.

DEEP – The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

WWTF – Wastewater Treatment Facility

MGD – Millions of Gallons per Day

How do I get More Information?

You can obtain more information on the WPCA website here: <https://www.ridgefieldct.org/water-pollution-control-authority-wpca>, you can contact Diana Van Ness, the WPCA Administrator via phone at 203-431-2734 or via email at dvanness@ridgefield.org, or you can attend a WPCA meeting which is typically held on the fourth Thursday of the month at the Town Hall Annex.

Prepared by the WPCA

**This Question will be on the Ballot
on Election Day Tuesday, November
6, 2018 between the hours of
6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.**



Town of Ridgefield Explanatory Text for Election Day WPCA Question

November 6, 2018