

Town of Sandy Creek Public Sewer Interest Survey Frequently Asked Questions Date: September 24, 2020

The following is a list of frequently asked questions regarding the public sewer project in the Town of Sandy Creek and the interest survey that was sent out to the study area along North and South Sandy Pond.

Project and Interest Area:

- 1. Where is the interest area for this project?**
 - a. This project is primarily focused on properties west of NYS Route 3 which includes properties along Lake Ontario, North Sandy Pond, and South Sandy Pond.
- 2. Is the CEHA area included?**
 - a. At this time, NYSDEC does not allow construction of utility projects within the Coastal Erosion Hazard Area (CEHA).
- 3. How will you determine the district area?**
 - a. The district area will be determined based on the interest in the area and potential cost to the residents.
- 4. Will the size, and therefore overall capacity, of the project be based solely on the survey results?**
 - a. Yes and no. The survey results will be used as a guide to determine the overall project need and locations where people are interested. The project will be designed accordingly.
- 5. Will B&L design the system or will a firm be hired by the Town?**
 - a. B&L is the engineering firm who has been obtained by the Town for this project.
- 6. When will construction begin?**
 - a. If this project moves forward, the earliest construction would begin is 2024.
- 7. Will a construction management company be needed to oversee the project and adhere to EFC MWBE requirements?**
 - a. If the project receives funding from EFC or other agencies that have MWBE requirements, the project will be subject to those requirements.

Cost:

1. What does the \$1200 include?

- a. The \$1200 is based on \$950 of debt service, \$230 for system operation and maintenance, and \$20 for annual grinder pump electrical cost.

The debt service portion of the cost is what needs to be paid each year to cover the cost of the loan for the project.

The system operation and maintenance helps cover the cost of a system operator, maintenance and repair costs, and your usage costs, the cost to treat your waste.

The electrical cost mentioned above is the cost for the electricity that is used to run the grinder pump.

2. Will the \$1200 be billed monthly or in our taxes?

- a. The billing process has not been determined.

3. When will we have to start paying the \$1200?

- a. This has not been determined.

4. How long will we have to pay the \$1200?

- a. The debt service portion of the project, approximately \$950, will only be for the lifetime of the loan, about 30 years. The \$250 dollars that is for system operation and maintenance and pump electrical cost will continue, and may fluctuate, for the lifetime of the system.

5. What is the cost if we don't want to connect?

- a. Every parcel included within the sewer district, will be responsible for paying the associated portion of the debt service. If you are not within the sewer district, you will not be responsible for any costs.

6. What do we have to pay for?

- a. There are no additional connection costs as this is a turn-key project. The project will include a new treatment plant, the collection system, a sewer lateral to your property which includes a grinder pump and connection to the public system.

7. What is the REDI Grant for?

- a. The REDI Grant, provided by New York State, is covering the cost of the interest survey, the sewer study, the district formation process and future funding applications.

8. Is there funding from the State that the Town can utilize?

- a. The Town is always looking for additional grants and funding opportunities from all sources including the State and the Federal government.

9. Why not pay according to water like other Towns?

- a. The operation and maintenance costs for a Sewer collection and treatment system generally do not fluctuate significantly with the normal variations in flow. Water bills on the other hand is almost entirely a function of water usage. Additionally, not all users within the Sewer District may be hooked up to the water system therefore individual water use information may not be available.

10. For those with seasonal residences, do you have to pay during the off months?

- a. If you have a seasonal residence, you will still be responsible for an annual debt service.

11. If you get a grant, does this reduce the \$1200 cost?

- a. The \$1200 is based on approximately \$15 million in grants. If the Town is successful in obtaining more grant funding and other costs do not increase, the \$1200 estimate of yearly costs would decrease accordingly.

12. If only half the people say they want it, what happens to the costs?

- a. This has not been determined. Costs will depend on how many people are connected to the system and the overall system size and location. However, the more people who are part of the system, generally, the lower the overall costs.

13. Besides the \$1200 yearly costs, is there a usage costs based on volume?

- a. This \$1200 is an estimate that encompasses everything; debt, Operation & Maintenance, and electrical costs. This estimate is based one (1) EDU.

14. Are all the construction costs being paid for by the residents?

- a. The construction costs are paid for by those within the district. If you are a part of the sewer district, you will help pay for the construction costs. If you are not part of the district, you will not be responsible for the project costs.

15. Are we going to pay the monthly fee even if the area you live in rejects it?

- a. If you are not located within the sewer district, you will not be responsible for the cost of the project.

16. Will the project increase my property value and therefore taxes?

- a. This is unknown. It may however make your property more attractive to buyers and make it more sellable.

17. Does every camp site have to pay the \$1200 a year?

- a. The \$1200 is based on a per EDU bases. If your camp is assigned 1 EDU, you will be responsible for the \$1200. If your property has multiple camp sites, the number of EDU's would likely be similar to those assigned for water.

18. Is the \$1200 estimate based on today's dollar or predicted inflation?

- a. This is based on construction in 2024 and already includes inflation. It is based on an estimated inflation of 3% per year and it also includes contingency. If inflation does not increase that much by 2024 and other costs stay the same, this \$1200 could likely decrease.

19. Why is this cost more than the cost that was included in the last presentation a couple years ago? What about the grant that Governor Cuomo came up with that provided many millions of dollars to fund clean water projects; wouldn't that have reduced the cost from the previous project projection?

- a. The grant you may be referring to was a part of the Resiliency and Economic Development Initiative (REDI) program, which was announced by the Governor in 2019. This money was set aside for projects that addressed issues caused by high lake levels. Sandy Creek sought funding for the implementation of this project however since the project was not "ready" enough, funds were only granted to further "ready" the project. That is the \$190,000 REDI grant mentioned in the presentation. (Note: projects that were "ready" when this opportunity came out received grant up to 90% of the project cost!).

We are hopeful that this opportunity will come around again however at this time there are no indications to if and when that may be. It does however speak to the importance of continuing progress on getting this project "ready". Just in the past 1-2 years, construction prices have risen quite substantially, as much as 25% - 30% in some cases, and therefore increased the estimated cost of the overall project. As prices go up each year, this project could likely become more expensive over time due to these rising costs and inflation.

System:

- 1. Who is responsible for maintaining and repairing the sewer lateral and grinder pump?**
 - a. The Town will be responsible for maintaining and repairing all parts of the system that are installed as part of this project, including the sewer lateral and grinder pump, for the life of the loan (approximately 30 years).
- 2. What if there is a power outage? Will the system backup?**
 - a. If there is a power outage, the treatment facility and pump stations will continue operating as normal. The collection system and grinder pumps will have a backflow preventer which will prevent wastewater from flowing backwards. This means that wastewater from other residents will not backup into your grinder pump. Your grinder pump unit will serve as "storage" during power outage. A small portable generator can be plugged in and pump out the grinder pump basin.
- 3. Does using the system only seasonally negatively impact the sewer system?**
 - a. No. The system will be designed so that it can handle the additional flows during the summer as well as the lower flows during the winter. These lower flows will not negatively impact the system.

- 4. I have a trailer park. Does each trailer need a grinder pump or can one pump operate multiple sites?**
 - a. This is something that can be looked at during design. A possible option is a duplex grinder pump which is capable of handling the flows from multiple sites.
- 5. Are multiple grinder pumps needed for your garage and your house?**
 - a. If your garage has a single bathroom connected to the system, only one pump would be needed. However, if your garage has an apartment in it, the property may need two grinder pumps or a duplex pump.
- 6. Are there any locations being considered for the new sewage treatment plant?**
 - a. This has not been determined yet.
- 7. Where will the outfall be located?**
 - a. The wastewater will most likely be dispersed into Lake Ontario and not into the North Sandy Pond or South Sandy Pond, since these are already considered impaired waterbodies.
- 8. What would the capacity of the new plant be?**
 - a. It is estimated that the wastewater treatment plant would be designed to handle an average daily amount of about 300,000 gallons per day. Per 10 State Standards, the plant would be rated to treat much higher peak flows (over 1 million gallons).
- 9. Where do you place the back flow preventer and who is responsible for that?**
 - a. A backflow preventer would be installed as part of the lateral kit and grinder pump. The Town would be responsible for maintaining and repairing it.
- 10. What if my septic system works fine? Do I have to be part of the new system?**
 - a. No, you will not be required to connect to the system. The Town would not allow any further septic system replacements or installations within the Sewer District.
- 11. Have package plants been checked into to help reduce costs?**
 - a. Multiple treatment plant options will be looked into during the study and design phases, including packaged treatment plants.
- 12. Will there be an issue with the discharge from the grinder pumps pumping uphill if you live below road grade?**
 - a. The grinder pump is designed specifically for this purpose. The pump is powerful enough to pump your wastewater into the collection system.
- 13. Will I have control over placement of the grinder pump?**
 - a. Yes. You will be able to work with the Contractor to place the pump. It will need to be located somewhere near the location where wastewater comes out of your house.
- 14. Why use an individual house grinder pump instead of a communal pump for multiple houses?**
 - a. This option was examined. However, since most properties are low-lying, it would not be feasible to allow wastewater to flow by gravity throughout the system.

15. How many pump stations will be needed?

- a. This has not been determined yet. It is predicted that at least one will be required.

16. Is there a history of this type of system and have you evaluated it for problems and failure incidents?

- a. This type of public sewer system is used throughout New York and successfully conveys wastewater through the collection system to the treatment plant. Most notably, this type of system, including the grinder pumps, is used to serve a large portion of properties surrounding Oneida Lake.

17. The cost of the project is the factor that troubles me, especially since it's a seasonal camp and currently costs me nothing to have my septic system. Reducing the cost as much as possible is key to a happy outcome for me.

- a. This is a common sentiment. The Town will make every effort to successfully obtain as much grant funding for the project as possible. The Town has been successful in the past in efforts to obtain grant funding. The more grant funding for the project, the lower the cost to the residents.

Interest Survey:

1. What percentage of surveys have been returned? How many responses do you need to move forward with the project?

- a. Approximately 30% of surveys have been returned as of September 17, 2020. It will be up to the Town to decide how to proceed based on the results of the survey.

2. If the project isn't a go, is there any grant money that can be used to install better private septic systems?

- a. The grant money the Town has received is not intended for this purpose. We would recommend looking into the grant program announced by Oswego County which assists in funding the cost of constructing a new septic system for people in at risk areas along the Lake.