



Norwich Public Utilities held informational meetings on September 1 and 16, to present information on a proposed sewer project for Flyers Drive, Lambert Drive & Wayne Street. This document contains the complete list of questions and answers from these meetings. If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact Project Manager Bob Malouf at (860) 823-4189.

Questions & Answers: Project Background & History

Q: How was this project initially proposed?

A: A number of neighborhood residents approached Norwich Public Utilities (NPU) about installing sanitary sewers in this neighborhood. These homeowners have properties whose septic systems are failing and have found the cost of re-engineering them to state health codes cost prohibitive (one neighbor reported receiving a replacement proposal in excess of \$30,000). These homeowners run the risk of having their properties condemned. NPU received a petition containing dozens of signatures. After reviewing the project area, it was recognized that many of the homes have septic systems that have aged close to their anticipated life expectancy (about 30 to 40 years). Due to existing lot sizes and new construction regulations, it was noted that many homes in this project area will soon face the same dilemma as those homeowners who circulated the petition of interest. After receiving the petition, NPU proceeded to explore a sanitary sewer construction project for Flyers Drive, Lambert Drive, and Wayne Street.

Q: Why wasn't this sewer project done in 1998-99 when the road was already open to install water mains?

A: Doing as much underground work as possible when the road is open is always our first preference. Unfortunately, there was no city sewer available any where in the vicinity to tie in to when this water project occurred.

Q: Does NPU realize how the Harland Road project road conditions disrupted and inconvenienced the residents now affected by this project?

A: Absolutely, yes. This is the primary reason that a larger project area is being recommended. By doing the Flyers Drive Project as a larger project, it could be completed and completely repaved over an approximate two-year period. Breaking it into smaller projects would take several years and greatly inconvenience residents of an area that have already had their travel and road conditions disrupted for a long period of time.

Q: Two properties on Canterbury Turnpike were originally included in the project. Why were they removed?

A: These properties were never included in the original project design, and were added later. After re-evaluating the project design and age of the homes septic infrastructures, they were removed.

Q: Why weren't Ethel Drive and Stewart Street included in the project area?

A: Including these properties in the project area would have required the installation of additional pump stations, which would have increased the overall project costs, resulting in higher assessment charges. In addition, because the properties on these streets are primarily newer homes with septic systems that meet current code requirements, they were excluded from this project.

Questions & Answers: Project Benefits & General Homeowner Impact

Q: What are some of the major benefits of tying into city sewer?

A: There are several benefits to having sanitary sewers in a neighborhood. These include a higher resale value of the properties, and the elimination of septic system maintenance concerns and responsibilities. One benefit that is often overlooked is that a property owner is now free to increase the size of their home or build on top of their current leach field and septic tank.

Q: I'm not sure if I need city sewers because I have septic that is working fine. When do septic systems generally need to be replaced?

A: In general, septic systems last between 30 and 40 years. After 40 years, most systems are considered to be functioning on borrowed time. Re-engineering a leach field and septic system to meet current health and environmental codes can often cost in excess of \$15,000. Based on the age of the homes in the project area, many will soon be due for replacement. More simply put, septic systems of the 1960s were built very differently from a system that meets code today. Any new system must be installed to meet current code requirements.

Q: How does the lien process work with the sewer assessment? Does NPU place a lien upon the property only if payments are not made?

A: A lien is automatically placed on the property at the time of the assessment. The amount owed on the assessment is reduced as payments are made and paid in full if the property is sold.

Q: What if the project is approved and the contractor damages my property?

A: NPU goes to great lengths to photograph and document each and every home in the project area prior to construction for driveway, landscaping, foundation conditions, and any other unique property features. NPU Project Manager Bob Malouf is the contact person to which any report of property damage claims should be promptly directed. He can be reached at 823-4189.

Q: How can you best summarize all of the project costs for a homeowner?

A: The easiest way to understand the homeowner's project costs is to remember it as three pieces. The first piece is the assessment cost, which is currently estimated at \$8,471. The second piece is the \$2,500 connection fee, which covers the cost of the sewer lateral (the sewer pipe stub which connects from the sewer main to the curb line of the property). The third piece is the cost of the individual contractor who must be hired by the homeowner to connect the service from the curb line directly into the home. This cost generally runs between \$10 to \$25 per linear foot, and includes the cost for abandoning/filling your old septic system.

Questions and Answers: The Project Approval Process

Q: If people in the neighborhood don't want sanitary sewers, will the project still go forward?

A: The Norwich City Council will be given the information that NPU has gathered from the two informational meetings, as well as the follow-up correspondence that was sent to those who could not attend the meetings. The City Council will then make their decision to move the project forward or not, based on what they believe is in the best interest of the city.

Q: What's the next step after the informational meeting?

A: The information from the informational meetings and correspondence with those who could not attend the meetings will be forwarded to the Norwich City Council. The Council will then use this information to decide if the project goes forward. Residents will be able to express their opinions for or against the project at a public hearing at City Hall. The date and time of that hearing have yet to be determined, but you will be notified by NPU when it has been determined.

Q: The letter inviting neighbors to the meeting states that NPU will make a recommendation to the Norwich city council on whether to proceed with the project. Is this accurate?

A: Not exactly, the letter incorrectly states that NPU will make a recommendation to the City Council. In actuality, NPU simply relays the results of the neighborhood vote to the City Council. The Norwich City

Charter then authorizes the City Council to make a decision based on its evaluation of what is best for the neighborhood and the community.

Q: Will the survey results for or against the project be made available to the public?

A: Yes, they will. Once the information process is completed, we will be sharing the results with all property owners in the scope of the project, as well as the Norwich City Council.

Questions & Answers: Project Time Line and Time Frames

Q: If the project were to be approved in the next month or two, what are the timeframes for the start and completion of the project?

A: If approved by the City Council, construction could begin as early as the spring of 2007. With this start date and weather contingencies, the project completion date should be the summer of 2009.

Questions & Answers: Tying-In to City Sewer

Q: If a house is located below street level, how would a homeowner tie-in without the help of gravity?

A: The property owner would need to have a sewage pump installed by their own contractor. A sewage pump would pump the waste to street level where gravity would take over. The property owner would be responsible for the total cost of installation and any future maintenance or replacement of the sewage pump.

Q: Can city water be connected at the same time?

A: If there is city water available in the area, a property owner can tie into city water at any time they wish. The homeowner should contact NPU or Project Manager Bob Malouf for a referral to one of our Project Coordinators who will assist you with the tie-in.

Q: If a property is located on a corner lot, who would make the decision as to where/what street the properties sewer service would tie into?

A: If the project is approved, NPU will contact all homeowners in the project area to begin the engineering studies that will address connection requirements for all properties. Similarly, residents on corner lots will work with the NPU Project Manager or his designee to determine the best location for the new service line.

Q: What happens to the septic tank if you tie in?

A: As part of the tying in process, the old septic system must be disconnected. This is generally done by the contractor performing the tie in and involves pumping the old septic system and either filling it with sand or crushing it.

Q: What is a rough estimate for a licensed contractor to connect a home to the curb line to receive sewer service?

A: While the price will vary by contractor, based on previous projects, property owners can expect to pay between \$10 and \$25 per foot to connect their homes to the city sewer system.

Q: Can I tie in more cost effectively if my neighbors and I use the same contractor?

A: While NPU cannot make recommendations or referrals to or about specific contractors, some contractors have been known to offer a cost savings if they are doing more than one tie-in job in a neighborhood. NPU can recommend that neighbors inquire about this option when they select a contractor to tie in their property.

Q: Does NPU get involved in assuring the legal licensing of contractors that homeowner's may hire to tie in to city sewer?

A: Prior to allowing any property to tie into the new sewer system, NPU inspects the connection work, but this does not include license verification. A qualified contractor should hold a P-1 or P-7 contractors license. To determine if a contractor holds a legal license, homeowners are recommended to inquire with the State Department of Consumer Protection at its website

<http://www.dcpaccess.state.ct.us/DCPPublic/LicenseLookup.asp>

Questions & Answers: Utility Billing

Q: How will sewer bills be calculated if I decide to tie in?

A: NPU calculates a customer's monthly sewer bill based on the amount of water a household uses. This rate includes some standard assumptions about the water that may or may not actually go into the city sewer. This provides allowances for activities such as car washing, lawn watering and gardening.

Q: Is there a monthly sewer charge?

A: Yes. All customers utilizing the sewer system of the City of Norwich Sewer Authority will be charged a minimum customer charge of \$4.10 per month in addition to a volume charge of \$3.50 per 100 cubic feet (CCF) of waste.

Q: How would you meter sewer usage if there isn't a water meter because the homeowner has a well?

A: If the property owner is not tied into the NPU water system, a water meter would need to be placed on the well to measure water consumption. This meter reading would be used to bill for sewer only.

Questions & Answers: Road Conditions & Project Construction

Q: Will this project area require blasting?

A: Blasting is required in a project when ledge is found in the ground. NPU's preliminary engineering evaluation of this project area indicated that no ledge was found in the roads of this project, meaning no blasting will be necessary. However, if ledge is found on individual properties, some blasting in these cases will be required.

Q: What about the road conditions after construction? When would the roads be permanently repaired and not just hot patched?

A: After construction, the trench area will be temporarily paved. After one winter to allow for frost heaves and settling of the area around the sewer mains, the contractor will permanently pave all trenches.

Q: Is there a standard depth for the sewer pipe?

A: Sewer pipe must be laid at a depth which will allow gravity to carry the waste. Pipe must also be laid well below other utilities in the road. So while the depth of pipe may vary, as a rule, it is generally at least 8 feet deep.

Q: Where will the sewer pump station be located if the project is approved?

A: The pump station will be built near Canterbury Turnpike, between the addresses of 77 and 79 Lambert Drive.

Q: Does the pumping station cause odors in the neighborhood?

A: Residential pump stations generally do not cause odor problems in a neighborhood. Should this occur however, NPU has equipment that can be installed to eliminate odor problems created by any of our pump stations.

Q: Where in the road is the sewer main placed?

A: The location of the sewer main depends on where the pipe fits in conjunction with the location of existing utilities, so it may vary throughout the neighborhood.

Q: How will NPU make the pump stations more attractive?

A: Pump stations are made more attractive by installing different fencing and landscaping options. Residents in the vicinity of the pump station are welcomed to make suggestions and recommendations of what they would like to see. These suggestions should be directed to Bob Malouf, Project Manager.

Questions & Answers: Project Assessment Costs

Q: What happens if we choose to subdivide our oversized lot at a later date?

A: The property owner would then be assessed on the new property and all of the assessments would be recalculated and refunds would be given to all property owners based on the new calculations.

Q: What happens if a property can't tie in? How would this change the sewer assessment?

A: We anticipate that all properties in this project area will be able to connect either by gravity or by a residential sewer pump station. While this has never occurred in any past projects, in the unlikely event that a property owner is not able to tie into city sewer due to project design, than that property would be removed from the project and the assessments would be recalculated.

Q: How close is the current estimated assessment amount likely to be to the actual assessment?

A: When developing project projections, NPU uses previous projects and current trends in construction costs to develop the cost estimates.

Q: What do you get for \$8,500 if you don't connect?

A: The assessment of \$8,500 pays for the installation construction of the sewer mains and sewer laterals to each assessed property.

Q: If I were to sell my property after city sewers were installed, what is the new value?

A: The value added to each property is the amount of the assessment. In the case of this project that amount is \$8,471.

Q: What about city property taxes? Will this project increase the amount of property tax I pay by increasing its tax assessment value?

A: No. The addition of city sewers to your neighborhood does not increase the value of your property for tax assessment purposes.

Q: What are the hidden costs?

A: There are no hidden costs.

Q: Are there any state or local funds available to help lower the cost for the city/neighborhood?

A: NPU consistently looks for Federal or State funding to support construction projects to save money for the city and its residents. Unfortunately, there are presently no State or Federal funds to support residential sewer projects.

Q: If I decide to tie in at a later date, would the interest rate assessed to those who tie in immediately still apply?

A: Yes, your interest rate would reflect the rate at which the money for the project was bonded.

Q: Is the cost based on the amount of road frontage (like water)?

A: The amount of frontage road does not affect the assessment charge. The assessment cost is calculated on the total cost of the project, using a "fixed fee" approach, meaning that every homeowner pays the same assessment amount.

Q: Why is there a \$2,000 discrepancy when I try to calculate the amount of the assessment on my own using NPU's figures?

A: The discrepancy does not reflect the fact that 20% of sewer project costs are paid by the city.

Q: Does NPU make money on the interest charged on the assessment?

A: No, they do not. NPU has nothing to do with interest rate associated with the project. That rate is based solely on the City's borrowing rate.

Q: Is the cost of this project the same in Norwich as it would be in any other similar area in Southeastern Connecticut?

A: Yes. The State of Connecticut requires that the prevailing union labor wage is paid in municipal sewer projects. This is the same throughout the state. All other costs are based upon the equipment, engineering and general construction costs for this specific project as well as the associated topography and soil conditions.