

Norwich Public Utilities breaks ground on \$200 million Wastewater Treatment Plant

In November, Norwich Public Utilities (NPU) formally broke ground on a five-year, \$200 million project that will modernize its wastewater treatment plant during a brief event in front of the former Administrative Building of the Falls Avenue facility.

“Over the next five years, the island on which we are all standing will be transformed into a modern, efficient wastewater treatment plant that will dramatically improve water quality in the Yantic, Shetucket, and Thames Rivers,” said Chris LaRose, General Manager of NPU. “Every community between Norwich and Long Island Sound along the Thames River – Preston, Montville, Ledyard, Waterford, Groton, and New London – will benefit from this project.”

Funding for the wastewater treatment plant project will come both grant funding and low-interest loan from the State of Connecticut’s Department of Environment & Environmental Protection (DEEP).

\$72 million in grant funding will come through the State’s Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF), which is administered by DEEP. NPU has worked diligently with its state legislative delegation to secure this significant level of support.

\$128 million in low-interest (2%) loans from the State’s CWSRF that will be repaid by NPU’s 10,000 wastewater customers over the next 20 years.

NPU will continue to advocate for additional sources of funding from both federal and state programs

to minimize the financial impact on its wastewater customers.

NPU estimates that the construction will likely take at least five years given two major challenges.

First, the demolition of the old plant and the construction of the new plant will take place on a man-made island in the middle of Norwich and adjacent to the City’s Transportation Center. All of the new structures associated with the project will be installed on a pile system to support their full weight.

Second, throughout the construction process, NPU’s existing wastewater treatment plant must be kept operational and remain in compliance with all conditions of its permit.

NPU’s wastewater treatment plant has served the residents of Norwich for nearly 100 years. Originally constructed in the 1930s, upgrades in the 1950s and 1970s were intended to extend its useful life by approximately 25 years.



NPU General Manager Chris LaRose speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony

Natural Gas Safety: Removing snow from meters

It is important to keep the area around your natural gas meter free from snow so that fire departments and other emergency response agency personnel have access to it in case of an emergency shut-off situation.

When removing snow around gas meters:

- Make sure you know the exact location of your meter before you get started.
- Maintain a safe distance between gas meters and shovels, snow blowers, and other equipment while shoveling.
- NEVER push snow against gas meters, gas piping, or appliance vents and make sure all vents are free of snow or other obstructions.

All natural gas customers should be aware that

gas meters that are buried in deep snow or damaged by snow removal equipment could begin to leak. Gas meter leaks are a potentially hazardous situation.

Customers are encouraged to report any problems with their meters to NPU’s gas emergency line at 860-887-7207. If there is a natural gas odor present, exit the premises and call 911 right away. Natural gas has a rotten egg-like odor.



Community Highlights



NPU’s Norwich WinterFest Light Parade Float



Otis Festival Award from Congressman Joe Courtney

10 tips

to winterize your home:

Make your home more energy efficient this winter:

1. Caulk around windows to keep warm air from escaping and cold air from entering. Even if you have done this in the past, caulking needs to be replaced periodically.
2. Replace weatherstripping around doors. If you can see light around the edges of your exterior doors, an investment of a few dollars to install weatherstripping can save you money each month.
3. If you have older windows and doors, adding storm windows and doors can also help you save money on heating costs. A more economical measure would be to install plastic film over windows.
4. Use heavy drapes and rugs to keep rooms warmer and add an insulation layer on wood or tile floors.
5. Change the filter in your furnace. Dirty filters cause furnaces to run harder, wasting fuel. Be sure to get your furnace or boiler serviced annually for maximum efficiency.
6. Programmable thermostats can make it easy to control temperatures in your home, especially when the home is not occupied.
7. Lower the thermostat when everyone is sleeping, and use additional blankets if necessary.
8. Dress appropriately by wearing cold weather clothing indoors such as sweaters and sweatshirts to keep warm, rather than turning up the thermostat.
9. Keep your water heater set at no higher than 120 degrees.
10. Sign up for a free home energy audit from NPU. It’s easy -- schedule an audit at your convenience by calling Lantern Energy at 877-878-3006 or completing an online form at <https://www.lanternenergy.com/schedule-an-assessment/>

NPU is offering a Community Assistance Rate for qualified families. Norwich households with incomes below 60% of the State of Connecticut’s Median Household Income by family size would be eligible for this new electric rate. To find out if you qualify, reach out to the Customer Service Center by calling 860.887.2555 for more information.

If you need assistance paying your utility bills, there are additional resources available to help. Contact these agencies for more information or assistance:

- Norwich Human Services - 860-823-3778
- TVCCA - 860-425-6681 or visit <https://www.tvcca.org/energy-assistance/>
- Operation Fuel - 860-286-0656 or visit <https://operationfuel.org/>

A minute with the Mayor:

By any measure, 2023 was a very good year in Norwich



Mayor Peter Nystrom

I've always enjoyed history and often turned to the great leaders of the past for inspiration today. Winston Churchill has always been one of my favorites. And his famous quote is very apt for where we find ourselves at the start of a new year: A pessimist sees the

difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

As 2024 begins, it is gratifying to look back at a year of great progress in our city, and with even greater hope for our future.

I am very proud to work with so many great optimists on behalf of Norwich. These dedicated and hardworking people come from the public and private sectors and helped move our city forward in so many ways over the past year.

Consider some of the achievements we have to be proud of that came to be over the last twelve months:

- The completion of the Westledge housing complex that brings 120 new market-rate apartments to our city. More housing will soon be available at 555 Norwich Avenue as part of the still-growing Ponemah Mills complex in Taftville.



Former YMCA Groundbreaking for the new Mattern Construction, Inc. building

- The former YMCA building is being developed into a new facility for a great local business; the Reid & Hughes Building is under development, as is the former Elks Club, which will bring new hotel to Norwich later this year.
- Norwich Public Utilities (NPU) will be very busy for the next several years with the \$200 million upgrade of its wastewater treatment plant and getting started on the \$10 million in upgrades to its natural gas system.
- In the years ahead, we will have four new elementary schools along with a renovated and upgraded middle schools that will give our kids a better educational experience.
- Our Norwich Community Development Corporation has been working with small businesses that are interested in Norwich – and lead the efforts on creating the Uncas Leap Heritage Park, which will

soon be an educational, cultural, and performing arts asset for Norwich and the region.

Every one of these projects, and so many more, reflect the time, patience, cooperation, and persistence of dozens if not hundreds of very optimistic people in our community.

But we cannot – and will not – be complacent. There is still far too much that needs to be accomplished for Norwich to reach its full potential. I am confident that the tremendous strides we are making will lead to even more economic and cultural progress in our community in the days to come.

I wish all of you, and your families, a healthy and happy 2024.

Winter Fire Safety Tips from the Norwich Fire Marshal's Office

With recent price increases in home heating fuel, fire departments are anticipating an increase in the use of alternate heating methods, which if used unsafely can lead to serious property damage or worse. In an effort to prevent accidental fires, the Norwich Fire Marshal's office has provided a few tips on heating safety for the winter season.

Smoke Alarms

- Install smoke alarms on each level of your home including the basement and inside and outside of every bedroom.
- Test your smoke alarms once a month.
- Change the batteries twice a year, the same time you adjust your clock.



Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- Where there are fuel burning appliances in the home, Carbon Monoxide detectors should be installed on each level of your home and outside of sleeping areas.



- When the alarm sounds leave the building and call 911. Tell the dispatcher if you feel ill such as headaches, or drowsiness. DO NOT reenter the building until instructed to do so by the fire department.

Portable Heaters

- When using electric space heaters, make sure to have at least 36 inches of empty space between the heaters and anything which could burn like curtains, papers, and furniture.
- Be sure your heater has a tip-over shut off feature.
- Plug electric heaters directly into outlets. DO NOT use extension cords or plug strips.
- Turn off heaters when leaving the house or sleeping.
- Unvented fuel fired portable heaters such as kerosene or propane are illegal in apartment buildings.
- DO NOT use your oven or range to heat your home. This is a safety hazard which could cause a build-up of toxic fumes.



- DO NOT use charcoal indoors. It can give off lethal amounts of carbon monoxide when burned.

Fireplace or wood stove

- Keep a glass or metal screen in front of the fireplace to prevent embers or sparks from jumping out and starting a fire.
- Do not burn paper in your fireplace.
- Put ashes in a metal container with a lid. Store the container outside at least 3 feet from your home.
- Have your chimney inspected and cleaned each year by a professional.
- Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet from the fire place or stove.



For questions on any of these tips or for more information, please contact the Norwich Fire Marshal's Office at 860-887-2780.

HERE TO SERVE YOU

Visit our website for more information: norwichpublicutilities.com
Please call, fax or e-mail us your questions, comments and suggestions.
Norwich Public Utilities, 173 North Main Street, Norwich, CT 06360
TEL: 860.887.2555 Fax: 860.823.4172 E-mail: communitymatters@npumail.com

