Sewers - *Frequently Asked Questions*

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Who has to connect and how long do they have?

The town will be writing a local law that will govern the connection policy. There is a State "model law" that many towns use as a guide. Typically everyone who is within 200 feet of the sewer line is required to connect. Beyond that it is considered too much of a hardship for the homeowner. In the preliminary design the team has planned spurs as part of the overall infrastructure to get connections close to resident's homes to facilitate their connection at reasonable costs wherever there is enough critical mass of homes to cost justify this. These preliminary plans can be seen in the map appendix to the Map Plan and Report document. Typically residents have a year or more to connect after the connection is available to them. It is too early yet but we hope to provide a list of qualified vendors to make selecting an installer easier for residents.

I have a new "engineered" system. Do I have to connect?

This again will be governed by the town law which is to be written. We expect that the town will establish a process where homeowners with a newly engineered system will be able to go through some process to certify that their system is working "as designed" and then will be granted a waiver for some period. Since performance of all septic systems deteriorates over time they will be required to connect at some specified time which the town will establish.

Who is responsible for grinder pump maintenance?

The town owns the infrastructure to the connection at the road. The homeowner owns the installation from there to the house, including the grinder pump. There is no general maintenance of a grinder pump, i.e. cleaning of filters, but of course as mechanical items they eventually fail. The average life of a typical grinder pump is in the 15 year range.

Assuming sewers are installed how long will it take for things to get better ?

This is a challenging question. As far as the coliform contamination in the Buell Heights and hamlet we expect that this situation should improve rapidly. The phosphorus situation in the lake is much more complicated. First the phosphorus that is already in the watershed will take some time to reduce. The lake also has a slow "turnover rate". That is, because there isn't a lot of water entering and leaving the lake it takes about 9 months for the water to exchange. Each situation is different but data received from ENCON in Saratoga Lake would indicate that there was a significant reduction in phosphorus in the first 5 years following sewers and a continued but slower reduction over the next 5 years.Why not just test everyone's systems and fix the ones that are broken ?

This sounds good on the surface but it doesn't address the major problem we have in this area. The fundamental problem is that the entire area is covered with shale and also has a high water table. Over the years a number of engineering studies have stated that under these conditions no system even if properly installed and well maintained will work properly. The reason that engineered "mound" systems work is that new, special sand is brought in and the system is installed above the ground level.

Why Don't you stop all the lawn companies? They are causing the problem

New York State banned phosphorus in lawn fertilizer in 2012. If you look at a lawn fertilizer bag the middle number of the n-p-k is always zero. The only fertilizer that can contain phosphorus is small bags of special purpose fertilizer like people would put on their tomatoes. Recently one of the local "big box" stores was fined by NYS when they were caught with bags of fertilizer containing phosphorus. Please see the following headline from the Times Union : *Walmart halts illegal sale of lawn fertilizer, pays New York state $98,000 fine.*

Why don't you limit the horsepower of boats and stop people from driving so close to shore?

Shoreline erosion is certainly a problem but it makes only a small contribution to the phosphorus load compared to what has been documented as coming in from streams. The most practical method to protect the shore is to install rock such as rip-rap or other barriers for protection. It is certainly understandable that human boat driving behavior is frustrating but legislating controls just isn't practical.

My home is far from the road and the ground is all shale. We shared a common water line with neighbors to reduce costs. Can we do this with sewers?

These special cases will need to be evaluated in the detail engineering phase of the project. There are also standards of the Saratoga County sewer commission which will we will need to comply with. It is the opinion of the writer that residents will probably be able to share a common trench to reduce costs but will likely each have a separate pipe in that trench. This will require the neighbors to secure an easement to allow a person's pipe to pass through another's property.

Who pays for the project … just the involved residents or the entire town?

Under New York State law all residents who "benefit" from sewers and only residents who benefit are charged. In this context "benefit" means that the resident has the ability to connect, which means that the line touches their property. No one who is outside the district will incur any expense.

Why not just test everyone's septic tanks and repair the ones that are broken?

The most important reason for rejecting this solution is that this that the geology of this area is not appropriate for septic systems. The area is largely underlain by solid shale and also has a high water table. As was stated in a 2005 study by C.T. Male for the Town of Ballston, under these conditions septic systems don't work properly. For the scientifically inclined there is a good description of the chemistry details in the document on the "Studies" page called "Phosphorus and Onsite Wastewater Systems".