

An Important Notice from the Woodridge Lake Sewer District

The Woodridge Lake Sewer District (WLSD) system processes waste from all of the homes in Woodridge Lake and approximately 50 other adjacent properties in Goshen. It is a municipality with its own Board of Directors and budget. The sewage collection system in Woodridge Lake runs underneath the roads in the development. Homes located above the elevation of the sewer mains are tied to the system by gravity fed lines, while homes below the sewer main elevation pump their sewage and waste water up to the road. Waste water is collected in a 75,000 gallon holding tank near the clubhouse and pumped to the treatment plant located near Beach Street.

Our treatment plant and filter beds were designed for a capacity of 200,000 gallons per day, but some years after it was built, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) determined that the system was not capable of handling 200,000 gallons per day. As a result, the DEP issued a consent order that requires WLSD to operate within a daily limit of 100,000 gallons. The issue of dealing with the consent order by upgrading our sewer plant's capacity has not been active within the DEP until last year.

If our system's capacity is required to be upgraded, the capital costs entailed will be very expensive and will be shared as a liability that will be passed on as tax assessments to all parties serviced by the WLSD (i.e., everyone in the Woodridge Lake community and some outsiders).

In 2005, the capital costs of two alternatives to remove the consent order were estimated: (a) \$10 million to pipe our waste to the Torrington treatment facility and (b) \$20 million to rebuild the plant and filter beds. Since then, the Torrington Sewer District had written the DEP raising a number of issues with the proposed Torrington pipeline. These matters are in flux and the WLSD is seeking to prepare itself and its constituents for the possible outcomes (i.e., the necessity of funding a very expensive capital project to handle our waste, noting the above estimates in today's dollars are likely to be low).

These pressing issues drew a record attendance at WLSD's Annual Budget Meeting held on May 22 at the clubhouse. The WLSD is delighted with the interest and is seeking to enlist the community in coming together so we can act in concert, mobilize our talented members and otherwise work together to understand the problem and contribute to a sensible solution.

Part of the Problem

Although our sewage system was designed to handle 200,000 gallons of waste per day, it is clear that it is unnecessarily overburdened by rain water and other runoff that has nothing to do with waste. February was a month without significant rainfall or snow melt. The average daily flow of waste water that month was 88,000 gallons per day with most days in the 50-80,000 gallons per day range. The last week of February, however, had some rainy days and the daily flow spiked to 232,000 gallons on February 26. The rains continued throughout March with an average daily flow for the month of 146,000 gallons with daily spikes of 262,000 on March 15 and 303,000 on March 31 –well beyond our system's designed capacity and the DEP consent order.

Thus, it is clear that if only waste were handled by our treatment facility –and not rain, groundwater and other runoff – the capacity issue would be very different.

Addressing the Problem

With the help of expert advisers, WLSD will seek to determine the causes of the non-waste runoff and possible solutions so that these findings might be presented to the DEP in an effort to somewhat mitigate the looming capital costs of \$10-20 million – or more – that might be required to treat our waste water to DEP's satisfaction.

The homeowners of Woodridge Lake can do something about this. Many homes may be in violation of WLSD ordinances and state and local regulations that mandate how each home can connect to the system.

Regulations state that no home can make connections to the sewer system of:

- *Roof down spouts*
- *Foundation drains*
- *Areaway drains*
- *Non-sewage sump pumps*
- *Pool drains*
- *Hot tub drains*
- *Dehumidifiers and water softeners*
- *Or other sources of groundwater or surface run-off*

Everything regarding the sewer system from the road line into a property is the responsibility of the homeowner. If there is a violation or problem, the owner must take care of it. Dealing with the major problems mentioned above involves homeowners in doing their part by checking that they are not directing rain water, ground water or other unnecessary flows into the system. Cleanouts located in the lateral between the street and the house must be checked to insure the integrity of the connection.

It is clear that there is groundwater inflow (water quickly entering the system after rains) and infiltration (seepage into the system over days and weeks). The WLSD Board is determined to significantly reduce this inflow and infiltration and will, with the help of outside experts, inspect the collection system including all connections, mainlines, man holes and all properties connected to it in effort to substantially reduce all unnecessary flows into the system.

The May 22 Budget Meeting

At this well-attended meeting, members voted to increase the mill rate from 2.75 to 3.30 to balance the operating budget and fund the repairs and capital improvements needed to maintain the treatment plant's existing capacity and operation. Sentiment was also expressed for the Board to assemble a committee of volunteers to assist with budget and other matters.

We will keep you posted. We want to actively engage the community in addressing these issues. The Board is looking for additional members and volunteers, so kindly contact us if you'd like to get involved. Please call the WLSD office at 860 491 2705.