



Town of **PROVINCETOWN**

Town Manager's Office

Questions from November 2, 2022 Special Town Meeting Forum

Thank you to the 80 attendees who joined our November 2 online Special Town Meeting Forum. A recording of the forum is available [here](#), and while we couldn't get to every question during the live forum, the following are all of the questions that were asked as well as answers, grouped by topic.

More information about the Special Town Meeting is available at www.provincetown-ma.gov/townmeeting and more information about the Sewer Expansion and Modernization Project can be found at www.provincetown-ma.gov/sewer.

Soccer Field/Treatment Facility:

- ***Can you clarify article 6? What will the satellite treatment facility look like? Will the field still be able to be used for recreation?***
 - Article 6 will alter the public way of Route 6 to combine two Town-owned lots to create the lot needed for the Satellite Treatment Facility at the current Soccer Field site. This article is similar to the article at the 2022 Annual Town Meeting for the new Police Station lot.
 - At this time, we do not believe that there will be adequate space left over for recreation (see below site plan). However, the current layout/design is still very preliminary and during the detailed design, options to reduce the overall site footprint of the Satellite Treatment Facility will be explored.

- ***The location of the sewage treatment at the soccer field presents significant concerns of odor to neighboring residence and the overall neighborhood. odor includes methane and sulfur. Even the best of mitigation and treatment alternatives /technology cannot eliminate odor. This will present health risk to neighboring properties and adjacent neighborhood, effect quality of life and effect property values. Please address this concern.***
 - One of the reasons the Route 6 soccer field site was selected was because there are so few residences in the area. There are currently only 3 properties located within 500-feet of the proposed site.
 - The proposed Satellite Treatment will be enclosed within a building and all tanks will be covered. Air from these spaces will be exhausted through activated carbon adsorber units to scrub noxious odors from the air. The proposed project will require the review and approval of the

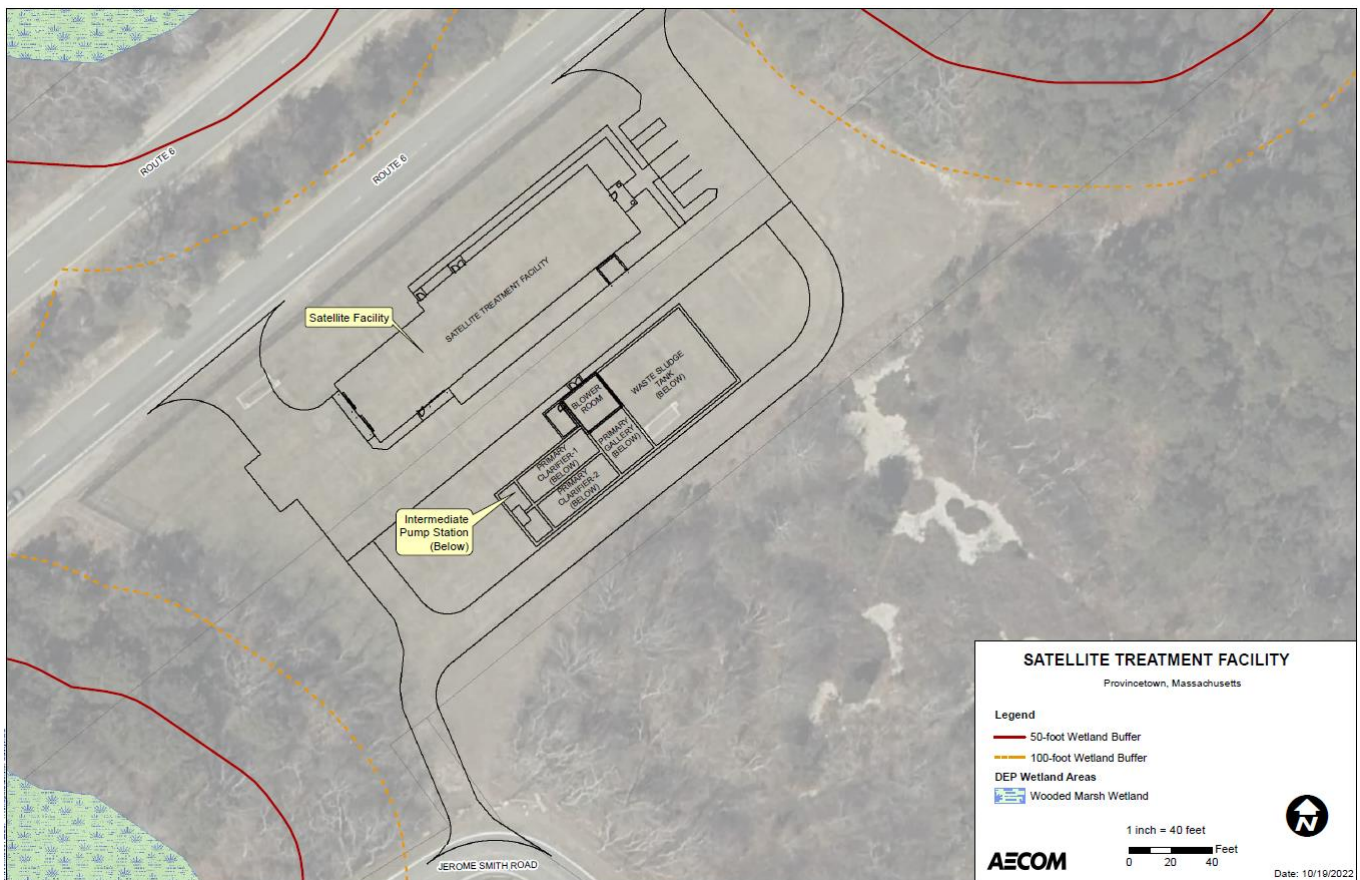
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to ensure that the public health and environment are protected prior to any construction.

- ***Is there space left at the soccer field for pickleball courts? Is there space for recreation at the soccer field after the building is in place?***

- As stated above, at this time we do not believe that there will be adequate space left over for recreation (see below site plan). However, the current layout/design is still very preliminary and during the detailed design, options to reduce the overall site footprint of the Satellite Treatment Facility will be explored.

- ***Not convinced there is no recreation space at the soccer field please post the overhead view of the soccer field with the proposed building.***

- See below site plan. As stated above, at this time we do not believe that there will be adequate space left over for recreation (see below site plan). However, the current layout/design is still very preliminary and during the detailed design, options to reduce the overall site footprint of the Satellite Treatment Facility will be explored.



- ***How many other sewer treatments plants in Massachusetts are located in residential areas? Is placing a sewer treatment plant abutting a residential neighborhood optimal?***
 - Many wastewater treatment facilities are located in close proximity to residential areas. As stated above, one of the reasons the Route 6 soccer field site was selected was because there are so few residences in the area. There are currently only 3 properties located within 500-feet of the proposed site.

- ***Can the town and the town consultant guarantee that there will be no odor to the neighboring homes and impact area? My research would contradict the consultant's conclusion that there will be no impact.***
 - As stated above, the proposed Satellite Treatment will be enclosed within a building and all tanks will be covered. Air from these spaces will be exhausted through activated carbon adsorber units to scrub noxious odors from the air. The proposed project will require the review and approval of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to ensure that the public health and environment are protected prior to any construction.

- ***What is the impact on traffic on Jerome Smith due to new WW treatment plant?***
 - One of the reasons the Route 6 soccer field site was selected was its close proximity to Route 6.
 - All major/heavy truck traffic will enter and exit on Route 6. However, an access drive is being proposed for small vehicle traffic (cars, pickup trucks, etc) on Jerome Smith. The Sewer Department is typically staffed by a total of 3 operators on a daily basis. Access to Jerome Smith will allow for operations staff to easily get to the downtown area to maintain the collection system equipment from this facility.

Environment:

- ***The slide about climate change went by quickly, so forgive me if this has already been addressed: How will the sewer function as sea levels rise?***
 - As part of the proposed modernization project, we will be evaluating all critical mechanical and electrical wastewater infrastructure to determine which areas may be impacted due to sea level rise and if needed what improvements could be made to better protect this equipment.
 - It should be noted that as the sea level rises, so will the Town's groundwater table. As a result, sea level rise will likely impact onsite wastewater disposal systems (i.e., septic systems) as well. If the groundwater table rises high enough such that existing leaching fields are now located within the groundwater table, these systems will no longer work properly.

- ***What's the benefit to lowering nitrogen levels to our environment?***
 - Nitrate is very soluble in water and is stable over a wide range of environmental conditions. It is readily transported in groundwater. An excessive amount of nitrate in drinking water can cause health problems and in the marine environment, overabundance of nitrogen in water starts a process called *eutrophication*. Algae feed on the nutrients, growing, spreading, and turning the water green. Algae blooms can smell bad, block sunlight, and even release toxins in some cases. When the algae die, they are decomposed by bacteria—this process consumes the oxygen dissolved in the water and needed by fish and other aquatic life to "breathe". If enough oxygen is removed, the water can become hypoxic, where there is not enough oxygen to sustain life, creating a "dead zone".
 - While Provincetown may not be subject to the proposed Title 5 revisions for a 'Nitrogen Sensitive Area' designation immediately when enacted, we should take this pivot in the state environmental code to inform us that conventional on-site sewage disposal systems don't do enough to treat wastewater.
 - The link between on-site septic watershed contributions to the nutrient loading of receiving waterbodies is not novel science. Provincetown is not a community to wait for environmental harm before reacting, we are proactive stewards of our groundwater, wetlands and harbor resources.
 - It is mainly because half the town is seweraged that we are not immediately facing DEP requirement to have septic systems that reduce nitrogen. We have a professionally managed treatment facility meeting groundwater discharge permit levels of nitrogen reduced to below the drinking water standards. And avoiding eutrophic environmental degradation.

- The future of Title 5 is expensive denitrifying technology, pushing the burden of acting like a treatment facility on private properties, and in a sewer community, we can avoid that.
- ***Is there any role for contained composting toilet systems as an option?***
 - Even with a properly permitted composting toilet there is a need for sanitary sewage disposal. The housing code does require the facility of handwashing sinks in bathrooms and provisions for kitchen warewashing.
- ***I am hearing nothing about I/A systems, which DO de-nitrify. They are onsite solutions which are affordable and effective.***
 - The I/A systems currently on the market under 'remedial' or 'general use' approval by MA DEP are expected to reduce the nitrogen concentration from the assumed value of 42 mg/l for a typical household to 19 mg/L. There are proprietary brands on the market that can be included with septic upgrade designs, usually adding to the cost of construction on the front end of the project and requiring an Operation and Maintenance contract for ongoing costs on the back end. Some types use power and add to energy costs, most types require lab sampling to ensure performance meets the denitrifying standard. The proposed new Title 5 regulations will require 'best available technology' with denitrifying systems that meet an effluent output of about 11 mg/L which is nearly the limit for conventional sewer treatment. The Provincetown Wastewater Treatment Facility is under a groundwater discharge permit to achieve less than 10 mg/L and actually averages closer to 5 mg/L.
 - True, I/A systems denitrify where standard Title 5 systems and older cesspools do not but this places the burden to act like a treatment facility on the private sector.

Vacuum System:

- ***Has an independent engineer reviewed the proposed sewer plans submitted by AECOM. Why was a vacuum system selected vs more reliable gravity system?***
 - An independent engineer has not reviewed these, this is the preliminary design phase.
 - Gravity option was evaluated early on and written off, with an estimated cost then of \$50 to \$100 million – concerns included:
 - Gravity needed to be 8-12 feet below surface but the groundwater is 3 feet below the surface. Loose sands for construction
 - Narrow streets, old buildings close to street, old wooden piers – potential damage, considered very dangerous construction with

potential of undermining foundations with older structures with gravity requiring sheeting the entire length of town

- Overhead power poles close to street a construction complication
- Businesses and residents were concerned about power outages, so preferred having 250 of the 350 properties on a single vacuum structure at the CVS, rather than 350 separate grinder pumps on their properties that they would need to maintain, the Town liked that. The public did not want grinder pumps - they wanted the CVS which would have back-up power.
- MassDEP also strongly encouraged the vacuum option.

Project Cost/Financing:

- ***How much money (specific number) would be lost if we postponed this vote to the Spring Town Meeting?***

- The exact amount is unknown, but we would no longer be in line for a large USDA grant this year, that would mean a year's delay – not just to April ATM – to submit application for funding, competition for limited funding will increase with other planned, large Cape Cod sewer projects, and since the work could not be completed under the existing Design/Build/Operate contract by the June 30th, 2022 deadline, the project will need to wait until a new contract is advertised and awarded, costing more and with a potential delay of several years.

- ***How will \$45M be funded if less than planned people hook onto sewer system?***

- The finances assume that properties will connect over the next 40 years, not all at the beginning, and that there will be revenue from additional flows from affordable housing and economic development that is approved through Growth Management. Since the loan is for 40 years, there is no problem with receiving revenue from betterments over this same time period.

Housing:

- ***There is a very real chance of housing loss of year-round rental and seasonal worker housing due to cost of assessment and hook up. Please address.***

- We are rapidly losing housing now, unfortunately. But there is a known, tangible benefit for the creation of new, year-round and seasonal homes beginning NOW with the Maushope expansion. They have told us that, if they have to use a septic system, they'll only be able to build 15

additional units. If the sewer is expanded, they will be able to create 30 additional units, rather than 15.

- ***Are you saying 3 Jerome Smith will not happen if these articles do not pass? Please clarify?***

- The project cannot happen with an onsite system, and our plan has been to have a sewer pump station to support this project and the new police station.
- If these Articles don't advance, we'd have to come to Town Meeting with an alternative plan to make sure the project stays on schedule as it is likely the project will become more expensive.

- ***Please address the challenges faced by properties like Tasha Hill that provide year-round and seasonal housing for multiple people. Properties like these will have extraordinary financial burdens and may not be able to offer individuals affordable year-round or seasonal rents. What consideration and/or financial incentives are being offered to properties like these?***

- While this property is somewhat unique, we have connection assistance available for income-eligible property owners and will not hesitate to go to Town Meeting with Articles in the future to ask for additional funds to ensure we have money available for those who need it.
- While connecting to sewer may seem expensive, we anticipate that it will actually be more affordable for many properties in the future as requirements for septic systems require larger disposal areas and more expensive systems.

Betterments/Connections:

- ***I don't understand the talking point that the town is not requiring hook up. The BOS had a conversation how that talking point seemed insincere and was "a bait and switch" (Their words). Can you clarify?***

- When you have to connect and pay a Betterment depends on the type of on-site system you currently have:
 - If you have a Cesspool, you need to connect when sewer is available on your street and pay (or begin paying) your Betterment at that time.
 - You also have the ability to install a new Title 5 system in the next few years to move into the "since 2000" category that will not have to connect until you want to or fail an inspection.
 - If you have an old code system installed 1978-1999, once sewer is available on your street, you connect when you want to OR when

you fail an inspection, but you have to begin paying your Betterment at the time that sewer is available on your street.

- You also have the ability to install a new Title 5 system in the next few years to move into the “since 2000” category that will not have to connect until you want to or fail an inspection.
 - If you have a newer Title 5 system installed between 2000 and today, once sewer is available on your street, you connect when you want to OR when you fail an inspection, and you don’t have to begin paying your Betterment until you connect.
 - As a reminder, if someone is already on sewer and has already paid their Betterment, they don’t have to pay anything more.
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- ***It appeared in one slide that a post 2000 title five system would have to pay betterment after 30 years. Yet we hear repeatedly that you don't pay betterment until you connect. Which is it?***
 - There was outdated information on one slide that has been corrected ([slide 46 here](#))
 - No one with a fully-compliant Title 5 system will need to connect (until their system fails as long as their system passes inspection)
 - The current Board of Health policy requires inspection at the time of property transfer, and for condos, every three years
 - Newer Title 5 system owners will get to delay paying a betterment until they connect to sewer.
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- ***For condos, are the betterment costs per unit or for the entire condo association?***
 - Betterment is based on total number of bedrooms in the condo association.
 - The Assessor’s Office sets up betterment accounts for individual condo units, not for the association. Each condo would have a separate betterment account and have their betterment apportionment appear on the fall tax bill.
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- ***I assume that for condo associations the connection costs would likely be somewhat less than the 10K average/estimates for a individual home (or stated another way...a 4 condo unit would likely not have a connection cost of 10K per unit).***
 - The connection cost is for the building and will vary for each condo property. That cost should then be apportioned to each unit by the condo association.

- ***Is there one tie in cost for condos that are on the same septic system since they all already tie into one place? Is the betterment locked in at the same price for all properties?***

- Yes, there is one tie in or connection cost for the condo association if the units are all on one parcel and served by the same septic system.
- The betterment rate will be the same for all properties served in Phases 6A (existing sewer areas) and Phase 6B (new sewer areas) if they start paying their betterment before the project ends in 2030. The estimated betterment rate is \$65/GPD of Title 5 flow, and the rate will be finalized in 2025 after all of the grants and subsidies are known. The rate is likely to increase after 2030 with inflation for properties that do not start paying a betterment until after 2030.

- ***Will our betterment cost prices locked in at today's rates, even tho we may not have service for several years.***

- The betterment rate will be the same for all properties served in Phases 6A (existing sewer areas) and Phase 6B (new sewer areas) if they start paying their betterment before the project ends in 2030. The estimated betterment rate is \$65/GPD of Title 5 flow, and the rate will be finalized in 2025 after all of the grants and subsidies are known. The rate is likely to increase after 2030 with inflation for properties that do not start paying a betterment until after 2030.

- ***Right now, we have six 2-bedroom units connected to 1 septic tank. Won't each two-bedroom condo be assessed a betterment fee?***

- The Assessor's Office sets up betterment accounts for individual condo units, not for the association. Each condo would have a separate betterment account and have their betterment apportionment appear on the fall tax bill.

- ***If we have access in 2029 is the betterment price the same as was shown today during the presentation? Or is it subject to change? If it can change, when will it be set and made to be "fair share"?***

- The betterment rate will be the same for all properties served in Phases 6A (existing sewer areas) and Phase 6B (new sewer areas) if they start paying their betterment before the project ends in 2030. The estimated betterment rate is \$65/GPD of Title 5 flow, and the rate will be finalized in 2025 after all of the grants and subsidies are known. The rate is likely to increase after 2030 with inflation for properties that do not start paying a betterment until after 2030.

- ***For places where the sewer won't be available for 5+ years, will the betterment fees be the same or will they increase?***

- The betterment rate will be the same for all properties served in Phases 6A (existing sewer areas) and Phase 6B (new sewer areas) if they start paying their betterment before the project ends in 2030. The estimated betterment rate is \$65/GPD of Title 5 flow, and the rate will be finalized in 2025 after all of the grants and subsidies are known. The rate is likely to increase after 2030 with inflation for properties that do not start paying a betterment until after 2030.

Financial Assistance:

- ***It seems two out of three financial assistance programs are still in development and not currently available - and we are assuming they are going through but there is no guarantee - is that correct?***

- The Town is very aware that some property owners live on a fixed budget and are concerned about the cost of being served by the sewer.
- Existing program
 - Any lower income property owner can delay paying a betterment until their property is transferred
- Barnstable County Loan Program
 - County is amending its low interest loan program for onsite system installation to include connection costs for any property owner for sewer as well
- Provincetown Income-Eligible Sewer Grant Program for Connection Costs
 - Approximately 250-300 properties will connect before December 2026.
 - \$491,000 in ARPA funds to put toward Provincetown Income-Eligible Sewer Grant Program for Connection Costs.
 - Will provide assistance for up to 100% of connection costs, based on need
 - Qualifications for Applicants
 - Income threshold of 80% AMI HUD
 - \$60,900 for Household Size of 1
 - \$69,600 for Household of 2
 - Exempt Provincetown primary residence as an asset
 - Exempt assets (checking, savings, etc.) up to \$200,000
 - No age restriction

Other:

- ***I live on miller hill road, it's considered a private road, do all these regulations apply to private ways.***
 - Yes. The plan includes providing sewer lines onto private roads. This will include a sewer stub to each property and repaving roads curb to curb. All roads (both paved and unpaved), will be returned to their pre-construction condition.

- ***Are sewer usage fees based on sewer generated or no of bedrooms in a house?***
 - Sewer usage fees are based on your water use, just like your water bill.

- ***There were 3 public forums in September/October that were both in person and available online (Was the town meeting about this in September in person or via internet?)***
 - In addition to the online Special Town Meeting Forum on November 2, the Town held in-person public forums on September 13 and October 12 in the Auditorium at Town Hall which were also available for residents to join online. Recordings of these forums can be found here:
 - [November 2 Special Town Meeting Forum](#)
 - [October 12 Sewer Project Forum](#)
 - [September 13 Sewer Project Forum](#)