**Town of Litchfield WPCA**

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The Litchfield Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) had their regular scheduled meeting on February 13, 2020 and the following week the Board of Selectman had their regular scheduled meeting on February 18, 2020. Numerous town residents and customers of the WPCA attended both meetings and voiced their concerns and asked many questions about the talks that have been occurring between the Litchfield WPCA and the Woodridge Lake Sewer District

(WLSD).

We felt it was extremely important to respond to the many questions and concerns, as well as provide clarity on the current process being used to make a determination of the viability of a partnership with WLSD.

**What is the Litchfield WPCA and what are its primary responsibilities?** The WPCA is state statute govern body who’s primary mission is to provide management and financial oversight of the wastewater treatment plant, one pump station, and 27 miles of collection system. We are considered a municipal tax entity and regulations that govern tax collection, late fees, and interest and are structured as such. Our annual operation budget is separate from the Town’s budget and is solely funded by user’s charges. The WPCA consist of five regular members and two alternate members. The members are appointed by the Litchfield Board of Selectman to serve for a term of five years and are all unpaid volunteers. Most importantly the WPCA works independently of the Board of Selectman, so that the business of running this vital public works is not influenced or impeded by politics.

**When did the WLSD formally approach the Litchfield WPCA?** WLSD asked to be put on the agenda at the July 11, 2019 WPCA meeting, to formally ask if the Litchfield WPCA would consider a proposal for a possible future connection of their collection system to ours. The WLSD agreed to pay for all engineering work to study the existing Litchfield collection system and treatment plant to determine if it could handle the additional flow and if not, what would be needed to be done to do so. As part of this effort, they have analyzed the flow capacity of our main sewer interceptor and evaluated plant flow and loading data from 2011 to present and share all the collected information and analysis with the Litchfield WPCA. There was no expenses incurred by the Litchfield WPCA as a result.

**What other work has WLSD paid for?** In addition to the plant analysis work WLSD’s engineering firm, DPC Engineering of Longmeadow MA, conducted a 15 week long flow monitoring period of the 21” main interceptor than runs from Constitution Way to the treatment plant, located in Bantam. DPC Engineering also performed manhole inspections of all the manholes in the above described sections of our main interceptor. This was done to study the impacts of inflow and infiltration (I &I) that is already in our collection system and to build hydraulic models for adding WLSD’s proposed daily flows into our collection system. The data and findings from these two projects will be shared with the Litchfield WPCA.

**When did the Litchfield WPCA formally notify the Board of Selectman of the discussions, and work occurring, between the Litchfield WPCA and WLSD?** Litchfield WPCA Chairman, David R. Wilson, informed the Board of Selectman and gave a presentation at the January 21, 2020 BOS meeting, providing an overview of the work to see if the Litchfield infrastructure could accommodate the additional flows from WLSD. In addition Chairman Wilson gave a brief history of WLSD efforts to connect to the Torrington treatment plant and why that effort, for the moment, has failed. Most importantly he outlined the proposed costs to possibly upgrade the Litchfield treatment plant, which is estimated to be $10.6 million based on the initial engineering assessments. In part of this process a funding application to the USDA would have to be submitted by the Town of Litchfield. This application is vital to weigh the possible funding sources (Loan vs. grant ratio) for such a project. The application for the USDA would have to be signed by the First Selectman of Litchfield. At this January 21, 2020 meeting the BOS approved a motion for the First Selectman to sign this application.

**What is the USDA rural development program?** The USDA has a rural development program that is structured to help rural communities, like Litchfield, obtain low interests loans, typically 40 years, as well as grants to do a variety of much needed infrastructure projects. This could range from upgrades to a wastewater treatment plant or to rehabilitation of aging sewer systems. USDA also offers programs that can assist residents in doing needed work to their homes as well as programs for industry and business. Here is a link to their web site.

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/ct>

**Why is the USDA funding application important?** In order for the Litchfield WPCA to thoroughly weigh all the positive and negatives of a possible connection with the WLSD the USDA funding application is required. Summiting the application is not a commitment to the project, and if approved it guarantees a maximum amount of funding. If the funding of such a proposed project is not financially beneficial to both Litchfield WPCA users, as well as the entire Litchfield community, this project will not happen. If the grants potential promised by USDA are not favorable to Litchfield, than this project will not happen.

**What are the potential benefits if the WPCA recommended this project with WLSD?**

First, Capital Costs: mechanical equipment at a wastewater treatment plant normally has a life expectancy of 20 years. The Litchfield treatment plant, built in 1972 and upgraded in 2004, requires additional capital improvements over the next five years. The WLSD would share a portion of these costs, reducing the capital costs to the Litchfield users.

Second, Operating Costs: Most of the treatment costs are fixed, the labor and benefits alone is over 40% of the total, and these costs don’t change with the increased flows. So WLSD’s share of the operating costs would help control user fees to Litchfield customers, and WLSD would pay more if its flows were to increase, but the cost to operate the treatment plant would go up very little as a result.

**What are the potential risks or deterrent to this proposed project?**

In any sewer system there is always a chance of a sewer overflow, The WLSD sewer down Beach Street, if that is the route chosen, would be a private pressure sewer line owned and maintained by WLSD. As a new sewer line with modern piping material there is a lower likelihood of an issue than in an older system. The risks to the environment are minimal as the project would need to meet and exceed all engineering, construction and environmental requirement. The proposed pressure sewer line to transport the sewage from WLSD to the Litchfield treatment plant would have a life expectancy of at least 75 years. No pump station would be built in Litchfield to accommodate this project. One deterrent is the potential capital costs of the project exceeding USDA’s funding criteria. The main deterrent is if there is not adequate savings for the Litchfield sewer user.

**Who would be responsible for the upkeep and preventive maintenance of the WLSD pressure and gravity line?** As part of any Inter-municipal agreement (IMA) with WLSD, it would be fully responsible for all aspects of providing preventative maintenance, insurance, and paying for any of that work and services for this private sewer line in the town of Litchfield.

**Who would grant the easement to run the WLSD private sewer line?**

The Town of Litchfield would need to grant any easements for this project.

**Why is DPC Engineering, who is working for WLSD, helping to prepare the USDA funding application for Litchfield WPCA?** The Litchfield WPCA has previously hired the services of DPC Engineering to perform various field work. This work has included flow monitoring and analysis work, smoke testing, and GIS locating of manholes. We feel confident in their abilities to work with us in properly preparing the USDA application.

**Has the Litchfield WPCA already made up its mind to support this project?** No, that is the not the case at all. The WPCA Commission must responsibly collect all the information to make the best informed decision or recommendation in regards to this project. Currently the WPCA is simply performing it’s due diligence to see if all or any aspects of this proposed project are viable and in the best interests of all Litchfield WPCA users, as well as the residents and businesses of Litchfield.

**Should the Litchfield WPCA hire an outside consultant for this project to assist us in this process?** At this time the WPCA has an unusual amount of in-house professional expertise as four of its board members are licensed professional engineers, several have experience with the wastewater industry. Including the Public Work’s Director and the plant Superintendent we feel it’s sufficient to represent our collective interests at this stage of the process. The decision to hire an outside consultant would be warranted if the project is to move forward after the response from the USDA funding application and a capital upgrade of the plant and /or collection system is required.

**When the Litchfield treatment plant was last upgraded?** The plant went through a $6.3 million dollar upgrade completed back in 2003. The upgrade included the addition of two new treatment tanks, increasing plant capacity to 800,000 gallons a day, new pumps and blowers all equipped with variable frequency drives, (VFDs) a new sludge thickening process, disinfection conversion from chlorine to ultraviolet disinfection for the treated effluent, a new SCADA system to allow semi-automation of the plant, and improved biological nitrogen removal.

**How long will this last upgrade last?** The typical design horizon is 20 years for these types of upgrades, which will be reached in two years.

**If we don’t accept WLSD sewage will we still need to do an upgrade?** Yes, the plant needs to install a mechanical bar screen and a replacement ultraviolet disinfection system over the next year. Over the next few years we need to upgrade the septic handling station, the sludge storage tank mixing, secondary clarifier flow capacity, waste activated sludge piping and waste activated sludge pumping. We are planning improvements to our aging collection system to address inflow and infiltration (I & I) in the near future.

**If the WPCA was to recommend that a potential partnership with WLSD is beneficial and in our town’s best interest. What will happen next?** First it is likely that we would need financing to do this project. This would require Town for approval of the design and build work for this project. After we receive the design and build work, and construction estimates we would have to compare it to the initial project approval and request additional approval if needed. At project completion costs in excess of the grant portion of any funding might need to be bonded. Additionally Litchfield WPCA and WLSD would need to develop an Inter-municipal agreement (IMA) that would outline costs and responsibilities.

If you have other questions you or are curious to learn more about the WPCA’s mission you are more than welcome to attend one of our regular scheduled WPCA meetings. Which are typically held the second Thursday of each month. Or you can read our 2018 annual report, that is up on the Town web site located [here](https://www.townoflitchfield.org/water-pollution-control-authority-wpca/pages/litchfield-wpca-2018-annual-report), which gives an overview of the plant’s performance, the past year accomplishments as well as our goals and challenges, The 2019 annual report will be published in March of 2020.