

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STATEMENT RE ON LOT MANAGEMENT

By Tom Foster

A number of residents recently received a letter from their septic system service provider that contained misleading information about how the Township plans to implement a proposed on-lot sewage system management program. The Board of Supervisors would like to set the record straight, so residents understand what will be happening, and so they will not be upset by scare tactics being employed by service providers trying to increase their own business.

Several months ago, the Board of Supervisors held public meetings on proposed plans for extending the public sewer system in the Eastern half of the Township. After considering the public comment and analyzing the high cost of both sewer line construction and plant upgrades required by DEP, the Board decided not to move ahead with the proposed public sewer expansion. Based on recommendations from DEP, the Board instead decided to implement an on-lot sewer system management program that would accomplish two goals. First, it would gather accurate data on the condition of all on-lot systems throughout the Township, so the Board could determine which neighborhoods really need public sewers and which do not. Second, it would give residents the information and education they needed to keep viable on-lot systems operating at optimal performance.

This on-lot management program has two different elements. The first is the establishment of an on-going program to maintain on-lot systems. Each homeowner with an on-lot system will be required to perform periodic maintenance and to make necessary repairs. Many people already do this, but some do not, which is why DEP is now requiring all municipalities to adopt such maintenance programs. While the details of this program are not yet final, the Township definitely wants residents to continue to hire a service provider of their own choosing. The role of the Township is simply to make sure that the maintenance is being done and to maintain records on the program.

A second element of the on-lot management program is a one-time inspection of every on-lot system in the Township to evaluate their condition and to precisely determine which areas may need public sewer in the future. The Board of Supervisors is still determining which of two approaches to take: Either have the property owner contract directly with a certified contractor or have the Township contract for the service. In either case, the property owner will be responsible for the cost. By having the Township as the contracting party there will be considerable savings. Specifically, six different service providers have quoted the cost of an inspection to be between \$250 and \$350. If the property owner contracts directly with a service provide, he or she would pay this fee directly. If the Township contracts with the service provider, DEP will reimburse the Township for 85% of the cost, so the resident would then only have to pay 15% of the inspection cost, or around \$50 for this one-time inspection.

The Board of Supervisors hopes that this explanation corrects the misinformation that is being spread and assures residents that they will continue to control which service provider maintains their systems. More details on this entire on-lot management program will be published in the next Township newsletter. A public hearing will be held early in 2008 by the Board of Supervisors before a final decision on which approach the Township will take.