

Press release

Westtown Township to Revise Its Act 537 Sewer Plan

WESTTOWN, PA July 16, 2007 ---The Westtown Township Board of Supervisors announced today that they are going to revise the Act 537 Sewer plan that had been proposed for the eastern half of the Township. The decision to revise the plan is the result of a recommendation from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which both oversees such plans and which regulates sewer facilities.

Although the Township's Act 537 Plan has been approved and strongly supported by the water and sewage planning section of DEP, the permitting section has called for a moratorium on increasing the discharge limits at any sewer plant, including Westtown's. Without this capacity increase, the entire proposed plan cannot be implemented.

The reason the moratorium has been imposed on sewer plants is because of new, stricter limits for water discharge of nitrogen, phosphorous and other pollutants allowed for facilities such as Westtown's. These new standards are calculations called Total Mean Daily Load (TMDL). They are being calculated by The U.S. Department of Environmental Protection and enforced by DEP on all plants that are expanding or coming up for re-certification.

While Westtown's 495,000-gallon-per-day sewage treatment plant on Chester Creek meets current effluent standards for nitrogen and phosphorous, re-rating the plant to handle the additional capacity called for in the proposed plan would require it to meet the new TMDL standards. Approximate costs provided from DEP for upgrading the facility using current technology are estimated to be ten dollars per gallon, or nearly \$10 million if the plant were brought up to its full capacity of 950,000 gallons per day.

The Westtown Township Board of Supervisors, staff and consulting engineers are studying ways to meet these limits, perhaps using other technology, but there is no way a solution could be implemented in the time frame called for in the proposed Act 537 plan. The cost estimates would add millions of dollars in expenses beyond the estimated cost of implementation to the proposed plan.

In light of the moratorium and the high costs of Westtown's existing plan, DEP recommended to the Board of Supervisors at an informational meeting on July 11 that Westtown Township revise its Act 537 Plan to accomplish the following:

- Conduct inspections of all on-lot systems in the Township. This process will allow the Township to identify those properties where failures have reached such a level that extension of the public sewer, as envisioned in the plan, would be necessary.
- Based on this inspection information, determine which problem properties can be sewerred at a reasonable cost, while keeping the total flow within the existing capacity limits.
- Implement an on-lot management program covering all unsewered properties in the Township that would include certifications by professional inspectors hired by the Township.

The on-lot management plan would become an acceptable approach for most areas of the Township rather than the extension of the public sewer system that has been the centerpiece of the proposed Act 537 Plan. In that case, Westtown would keep records of system conditions and maintenance throughout the Township. It would charge fees to cover the cost of the inspections, certifications, record keeping and other expenses. The Township would share information with the County Health Department, but the Township would have independent authority to order system repair or replacement of on-lot systems.

The proposed Act 537 plan had been opposed by a vocal group of residents who objected to its high costs. While the Board of Supervisors decision no doubt will please these residents, it does not solve the problem of failing on-lot systems throughout the Township. A significant number of residents have been pleading for public sewers for many years, and a survey conducted in 2003 indicated that approximately 20 to 25 percent of the homes without public sewer were experiencing problems.

Even with the moratorium on upgrading the plant, there is approximately 100,000 gallons of available capacity. While this is less than half of what was required for the proposed public sewer plan covering the eastern half of the Township, it may allow some homeowners to hook up if cost-effective construction options are deemed possible. The Township also has limited sewer capacity available at the West Goshen Township sewer treatment facility, but this plant is not currently accessible to either the eastern or western parts of the Township.

The Township is working with its sewer engineers, URS Corporation, to determine how to meet the needs of residents needing public sewer in the very near future. The Township also

needs to consider the sewerage needs of future development. All of these requirements will be part of the planning that will start immediately.

In summary, the Township will proceed immediately with an on-lot management program. The records collected in this process, coupled with other inspections, will indicate to the Township where public sewers are necessary. The revised Act 537 plan will reflect how public sewerage can be accomplished in the most affordable manner with the capacity that is available at that time.

For more information, contact Robert Layman, Westtown Township Manager.

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