

Dear Town Meeting member,

The Water Quality Management Committee (WQMC) requests your support at the upcoming November Town Meeting for two wastewater funding items that are important to the town's continued progress in cleaning up our valuable, but impaired, estuaries.

The first is Article 6 that will fund the design and permitting of the next phase of wastewater collection in the Teaticket Path peninsula and the northeastern part of Maravista. Passage of this article is even more important now than it was at Spring Town Meeting because of the Commonwealth's recent mandate that Falmouth commit by January 7, 2024 to developing and implementing Wastewater Management Plans for our 14 impaired estuaries. After acceptance of our plans Falmouth will then have only five years to develop watershed management plans and 20 years to implement them. This makes it imperative that we continue to move forward.

If we do not meet these deadlines, DEP's new Title V regulations would require all property owners within the watersheds of impaired coastal ponds to upgrade their septic systems to provide nitrogen removal through innovative/alternative (I/A) on-site treatment. This is a terrible alternative - it would be extremely costly (13,000 Falmouth households impacted and the average cost of the upgrades would likely be \$25,000-\$30,000 (>\$325 million town-wide.)), and, equally importantly, current state-approved I/A systems do not achieve the necessary reduction in nitrogen to meet the state-mandated Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) targets.

The second is a request within the omnibus capital article for \$700K, that will be used, along with other funds for a series of proposals to provide the background information necessary to apply for an offshore outfall in Vineyard Sound. Items within this request would fund: water monitoring in Vineyard Sound, fisheries survey, benthic sediment and infaunal survey, eelgrass monitoring, Sagamore lens hydrographic modeling and marine sediment borings.

One of the fundamental issues with sewerage around our coastal ponds is where to discharge treated wastewater. The WQMC has evaluated a number of options, primarily sites for upland discharge, and has concluded and recommended to the Select Board that an offshore outfall is the most ecologically responsible solution for our long-range wastewater discharge.

Below we address some of the concerns residents raised about Article 25 at Spring Town Meeting this year:

No more Nitrogen Pollution to West Falmouth Harbor - In the short term, tertiary treated wastewater from the Great Pond sewer area will be discharged to expanded, existing sand beds, and groundwater modeling concludes this discharge would not flow into West Falmouth Harbor. Instead it will ultimately flow directly to Buzzards Bay and Herring Brook marsh, which is a well-flushed salt marsh ecosystem. A recent study by the University of Massachusetts School for Marine Science and Technology concluded that this input will have no adverse impacts on the Herring Brook ecosystem.

What is the longer term Plan for Disposal of Falmouth's Treated Wastewater? - Importantly, the WQMC recognizes and endorses disposing of tertiary-treated effluent through an offshore

outfall, and studies to determine the best site for such an outfall have already been conducted. This outfall would redirect all effluent from the Falmouth Wastewater Treatment plant to Vineyard Sound. Oceanographic studies show that this would have minimal impact because the Sound is extremely well-mixed and well-flushed. We anticipate obtaining permits to construct such an outfall within the next 4-10 years.

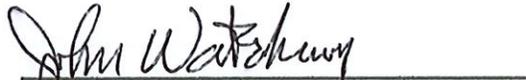
Cost of the Project - Article 6 requests \$3.8 million for design and permitting of the next phase of wastewater system expansion. The funds for this article will be borrowed within the levy limit, i.e., without debt exemption and, as such, there is no tax increase required to fund it. The actual construction of the proposed sewer expansion (to be funded in a future town meeting article) will also not increase the tax rate, because it would be funded from existing revenues freed up by the retirement of existing municipal debt (a so-called "window of opportunity"). In addition, it is expected that 70% of the collection system portion of the construction cost will be recovered through betterment payments.

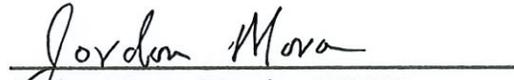
Alternatives to Sewers - Some members of Spring Town Meeting expressed a preference for alternative solutions to sewerage. Since its inception, the WQMC has studied and considered alternatives to sewers including shellfish cultivation, inlet widening, I/A septic systems, permeable reactive barriers, and composting and urine diverting toilets. We believe each of these strategies can contribute to the solution of our nutrient pollution problem. However, after years of careful and thorough study, the WQMC has determined that sewer construction is the most appropriate and cost effective solution in the densely settled sections of the Teaticket and Acapesket neighborhoods under consideration for this project.

Urine diverting toilets deserve further study and the WQMC supports a future article which would fund such studies. However, answering the many questions involved in determining the effectiveness and feasibility of urine diversion, particularly the considerable length of time to design, execute, and analyze the results of a pilot urine-diverting project, means that determination of the advisability of utilizing urine-diverting techniques cannot be achieved before the Teaticket-Maravista design and permitting process, only during and after it.

History and Context - The WQMC was formed more than 10 years ago and tasked with finding effective alternatives to the recommendation by the Stearns and Wheeler engineering firm to construct an extensive sewer system at a projected cost at the time of more than \$600,000,000. That is exactly what the WQMC has done - our recommendations and considerations have included staged development of a much more limited sewer system that targets high-density areas of Falmouth together with a mix of oyster aquaculture, inlet widening, installation of advanced on-site septic systems and urine diversion in some areas to meet the Massachusetts Estuaries Project and DEP targets for nitrogen TMDL's. We can restore water quality to our estuaries at a reasonable cost - but we must continue to make timely progress and take advantage of funding opportunities that arise as municipal debt is retired so that taxes do not need to be increased (so-called windows of opportunity). Passage of Article 6 will help to ensure that we stay on track.


Stephen Rafferty - Chair WQMC


John Waterbury - Member WQMC


Jordan Mora - Member WQMC


Ed Jalowiec - Member WQMC


Stephen Leighton - Vice Chair WQMC


Ken Foreman - Member WQMC


Tom Duncan - Member WQMC