



**PRESENTATION**

**ITEM NO. 29.**

**DATE OF MEETING:** July 20, 2009

**REQUESTED BY:** Rick Benton, County Manager

**SHORT TITLE:** Update on Maple Hill Sewer Project

**BACKGROUND:** A community meeting was held on Monday, July 13 with the citizens of Maple Hill to provide a review and update of the community sewer project that was first proposed in 2006. The project has been on hold pending procurement of grant funding, which has been further delayed due to State budget issues. The meeting on Monday was very positive and very educational for the citizens, and staff. Mr. Benton, Mr. Mack, Ms. Knoerzer, Jeff Thompson and Joe Boyd (Hobbs, Upchurch & Associates) and Marilyn Mears (Cape Fear RC&D) participated in the presentation. Mr. Rivenbark and Mr. Blanchard also attended. A copy of the meeting agenda is attached.

Mr. Mack will brief the Board and citizens on the project and the community meeting. The citizens were informed a project update would be on the July 20 Board agenda, and that they would have an opportunity to provide input if desired.

The next step is moving forward with the final property acquisition if the Board concurs.

# PENDER COUNTY UTILITIES

## ~ Maple Hill Community Sewer Project ~

Update Meeting

July 13, 2009

- Welcome
- Need for the Project
- Septic Tank Maintenance Information
- Design Details – Jeff Thompson, Hobbs, Upchurch & Associates
- Project Cost and Funding
- Land Acquisition
- Schedule – When funding available
- Customers Role and Responsibilities
- Next steps

## **Maple Hill Community Sewer Project**

- **The Project**

Based on documentation from the Pender County Environmental Health Department, the NC Rural Communities Assistance Program in 2002 identified the Maple Hill community to have approximately 54% of the existing septic systems in the community failing. Untreated effluent is directly discharged into neighborhood ditches or surfaces in residential yards due to failing drainfields. In most cases, the lots are too small or have soils not suitable for new septic systems or to allow repair of the septic systems currently failing.

Several options have been investigated and considered including:

- Providing additional septic tanks or repair existing tanks
- Conventional gravity collection system
- Pumping the wastewater to Burgaw or Wallace

Proposed System:

- On-lot treatment and spray irrigation disposal system
  - Includes new septic tanks to serve the individual homes or businesses (STEP sewer system)
  - A low-pressure collection system to transport the STEP effluent to recirculating filters for treatment
  - Surface or drip irrigation of the treated effluent

- **Current Situation ~ Proper Septic Tank and Drain Line Maintenance**

- Minimize the liquid discharged by conserving water.
- Minimize solids – Do NOT put grease or anything besides human wastes, toilet paper and water from toilets, sinks, showers, or laundry washers into the system.
- Have the septic tank pumped out every 3 to 5 years by a professional septic tank maintenance business.



- **Estimated Project Cost and Funding Status**

The total estimated cost to install the STEP systems, low-pressure collection system, and treatment/disposal system is between \$4.2 million and \$5.4 million depending on how many homes are served. The project is currently design to be completed in two (2) phases. The first phase will include 170 homes. The second phase may include up to an additional 170 homes. 222 citizens have previously requested service and are committed to the project.

- **Grant Funding**

- Rural Development Center - \$2.7 million. A requirement of the grant funding is that the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the project serve at least 75% of the original sign-ups (170 homes) ~ Current Status – Secured pending remaining financing availability.
- Clean Water Management Trust Fund - \$1.4 million. This grant was awarded to the project after several annual attempts. However, the grant funding was lost when the CWMTF was stripped of \$100 million in funding this fiscal year to assist in the State's Budget shortfall.
- Construction Grants & Loans - \$1.4 million. The CWMTF transferred our application to this agency upon losing their funding this year. However, the CG&L was overrun with application in light of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) by the Federal Government. There was \$70 million available, but over \$2.2 billion in applications. The Maple Hill Sewer Project was not selected for funding.
- Local Match – Each property owner will pay a \$250 Tap Fee to connect to the sewer system

- **Loan Funding**

Securing a loan for this project has been considered, however, the *debt service* per household would be between \$35 and \$55 per month **not** including the actual cost of sewer service currently estimated at \$26 month per household.

- **Land Acquisition**

After 2 plus years of attempting to locate viable land for the disposal of the treated wastewater by drip irrigation in close proximity to the center of the project, the Engineer has been able to locate approximately 60 acres that will work for the project. However, before the County completes the property acquisition and pays for the land, the Board of Directors of the Maple Hill Water & Sewer District (Pender County Commissioners) desires some assurances that the project will be successful and is still highly desired by the Maple Hill Community.

- **Schedule**

- Secure the remaining funding ?
- Complete final design and permitting December, 2009
- Bid and Award of Contract February, 2010 (if funding secured)
- Start Construction March, 2010 (if funding secured)
- End Construction December, 2010
- Project Closeout January, 2011

- **Property Owner Responsibilities**

- Continue to express support of project to the Board of Directors of the Maple Hill Water & Sewer District (Pender County Commissioners)
- Each property will be required to provide a Permanent Easement on their property from the street Right of Way through the location of their septic tank (for repair and maintenance by the District)
- Each property owner will be required to pay for the electricity required to run their septic tank pump (estimated to use less electricity than a Refrigerator)

- **Next Steps**

- Continue to express support of project to the Board of Directors of the Maple Hill Water & Sewer District (Pender County Commissioners)
- Await Grant Funding

## **Maple Hill Community Sewer Project Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1) What type of wastewater system is proposed for the Maple Hill Community?**

This project proposes to address water quality and public health concerns by constructing an innovative community wastewater collection and treatment system in Maple Hill. At each household in the service area, wastewater will be collected in conventional septic tanks and pumped to a common treatment and disposal site where the treated water will be spray irrigated into viable land.

### **2) Why is the project divided into phases?**

The entire sewer system, including pretreatment, collection, and disposal will be financed by Grant funds. Due to the limited amount of grant funds available and the timing in which possible funds could be received, the sewer system will be constructed in two phases. The location of each phase is based on the density of the population and the community participation rate.

### **3) Who can sign up for wastewater service?**

If you are a landowner in the Maple Hill Water & Sewer District, and currently live in a home or operate a small business on your property, you may sign up for sewer service. If you live in Maple Hill, but do not live within the projected Phase 1 and 2 service areas, it is still possible that you may connect to the system in the future.

### **4) How much will the Tap Fee cost?**

The one-time Tap Fee will be \$250 while the sign-up period is in effect (prior to the construction of the project). Upon the beginning of the construction, the Tap Fee will increase significantly (approximately \$8,000) because no grant funding will be available to subsidize the cost of the wastewater service.

### **5) What does the Tap Fee cover?**

The Tap Fee will be used to help cover the cost of replacing your old septic tank with a new one or modifying your existing tank and then connecting it to the main sewer collection line.

### **6) Can I pay the \$250 Tap Fee, but not connect to the wastewater system?**

All households that pay the Tap Fee will be required to connect to the system and pay the monthly sewer bill as a condition of the grant funding. If a household elects not to connect to the system initially, they will have 90 days to do so. After 90 days, they will be required to pay a monthly sewer bill each month (based on water usage) as though they were actually connected.

**7) How much will the monthly sewer bill cost?**

It is currently estimated that the monthly sewer bill will be approximately \$26 per month on average. This bill will be based on the water usage at each property and is used to pay the monthly operations, maintenance, and repair costs of the system.

**8) Who pays to pump each household's septic tank once the system comes on-line?**

The cost to pump the septic tanks will be included in the operational cost of the system and is included in your regular monthly sewer bill.

**9) Who pays for the electricity to run my sewer pump?**

Each individual homeowner will be required to pay for the cost of electricity to run their sewer pump. The sewer pump is estimated to use less electricity than a refrigerator.

**10) Will we have sewer service if the power goes out?**

An alarm system will notify the District when the power goes out. Pender County Utilities will monitor the system and take any actions necessary to maintain the system in the event of an extended power outage.