

## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

### **I support the project, but I am against mandatory hook-ups. Can we complete this project without this requirement?**

- Without the mandatory hook-ups we will lose \$675,000 in USDA Rural Development grant funding and an \$800,000 low interest loan. Without a substitute for this funding within approximately 30 days, an additional \$700,000 in grant resources will be forfeited.
- More importantly, without approximately 48 hook-ups the system will not have sufficient income from rates to meet annual operating costs.
- **Forty-four of the forty-eight property owners on the system support the project and voluntarily intend to hook-up. We are still trying to reach the remaining four property owners. While hook-up is mandatory, the residents support the project and intend to hook-up.**

### **What will be the impact of this project be on my property taxes?**

- Borrowing \$1,012,000 to build the project is estimated to increase the mil rate by 9 cents. The annual tax increase for a property assessed at \$200,000 is estimated to be \$18.
- Paying the annual cost associated with fire protection is estimated to increase the mil rate by 1.6 cents. The annual tax increase for a property assessed at \$200,000 is estimated to be \$3.20.
- The annual town cost of maintaining the salt filters would be eliminated saving 1 cent on the mil rate. The annual tax decrease for a property assessed at \$200,000 is estimated to be \$2.00.

### **I am concerned about the quality of the water at the fairgrounds. How do I know it's safe?**

- The Fairgrounds water has been tested for over 160 parameters. It has passed all state and federal standards with the exception of radon, which will be removed economically using an aeration system. These drinking water standards are the same standards relied upon by all communities in Maine and the U.S.
- The water will be rigorously tested at regular intervals in accordance with the terms of the District's the Maine State Drinking Water Program permit. The level of testing far exceeds private homeowner wells.
- Water is from a deep aquifer that is well protected by a dense silt and clay layer. The suitability of the well has been intensively studied by the District's hydrogeologist and reviewed by the Maine Drinking Water Program.

### **What were some alternatives to this proposal, and why was this option chosen?**

- The project was approached from the standpoint of identifying a permanent solution. Due to problems with reliability, stigma costs to the homeowners and community (resulting financial lending and private investment impacts), direct town and homeowner costs (pumps, servicing filters, salt, energy), filters were not considered as a permanent solution. The Upper Village is a Growth District, as identified in the Town approved Comprehensive Plan. A permanent solution is required.
- The salt filters further contribute to the salt contamination of the area. Each reverse osmosis system requires approximately 1 ton of added salt per year to operate. This salt is

eventually discharged to the household leach bed, resulting in an additional salt load to groundwater.

- Primary options considered were connecting to the Auburn system and a New Gloucester source system. Both are detailed in the Feasibility Study and the Preliminary Engineering Report posted on the District webpage. Briefly, connecting to Auburn would cost \$4,785,000. There would be little or no grant resource available to the Town, due to grant/income qualification guidelines. The length of the transmission main from Auburn would negatively affect water quality. Additional alternatives considered can be found in Section 4 of the Preliminary Engineering Report, District webpage last year.
- A New Gloucester source was identified as the lowest cost option with the best water quality.

**Why should the town have to pay to address this problem if owners were aware of this problem when they purchased their properties?**

- Regardless of who owns the property the problem must be addressed to avoid disinvestment in our village area. The property owners cannot address the issue alone. The problem was created by salt and gasoline spills -- parties with at least partial financial responsibility include the Town and Maine DEP.
- Some homeowners were aware of the problem when they purchased their property, some were not.

**I do not live on the water line. How does this project benefit me?**

- The Upper Village is one of the Town's Village Growth Districts, as laid out in the comprehensive plan. Without clean water you cannot attract new homes and businesses. It's also difficult for homes and businesses with contaminated wells to obtain bank financing for improvements due to appraisal stigma concerns. The result is disinvestment in our traditional business district.
- The median value of structures in the Upper Village is significantly lower than the rest of our community. Public water will help to raise property values and result in additional taxation income.
- A healthy village provides basic retail services and residential opportunities, supporting New Gloucester desirability as a place to live and work.
- The Town bears at least partial responsibility for the salt contamination.

**Can we eliminate fire protection from the project?**

- Fire protection will be required for the project to be viable and for us to meet the requirements of the grant funders.
- The benefits of the fire protection in addition to property protection and life safety include a lowering of the areas ISO insurance rating, which will result in savings on property insurance policies.

**Does approving this project mean there will be a lot of growth and development in this area?**

- The Upper Village is one of the Town's Village Growth Districts, as laid out in the Town approved Comprehensive Plan. Without clean water you cannot have an economically healthy village.

- Regardless what future growth looks like, the area needs clean water.
- Future zoning and growth planning will require full town approval. While workshops have been held to discuss master plan concepts, those concepts are preliminary.
- The mains are sized for fire protection, which allows for future growth if the Town so chooses.

**If the town rejects this option, what are the alternative options for addressing this contamination problem?**

- The \$1.4 Million in grant resources are not expected to be available to the Town in the future. The alternative would be to continue with filtering for the salt. DEP would draw their own conclusions regarding the benzene wells.

**Once this project is completed, if the water line is extended past my house in the future, will I be required to hook-up?**

- No, future projects would be handled individually. The terms of a future project would be determined by the District and Town at that time.
- The current connection ordinance version will be amended to be consistent with this approach.
- With regard to the current project, the Rural Development funding package requires Rural Development loan funds to be spent before Rural Development grant. If project bids come in under budget, the savings would first be applied to ensuring adequate water storage. If funds are still available, further consideration may be given to either additional main in appropriate areas or returning leftover funds to Rural Development.

**If I am on the water line can I use my existing well to fill my swimming pool or water my garden?**

- Yes, if your well is not one of the 20 contaminated or at risk wells. Testing may be required.
- The 20 contaminated or at risk wells will be decommissioned at District and DEP cost.

**If I hook-up, how much will the water cost annually?**

- As we do not yet have water usage information, the first year will be a flat rate for all users. We estimate the flat rate to be \$350 - \$400 per customer.
- During the first year the District will collect information on your water usage and develop a rate structure based on water usage. This will include a base rate and a graduated scale for exceeding the base volume.

**If I am on the water line, but my well isn't contaminated how much will it cost to hook-up?**

- The District will pay for your full connection.

**How is this proposal different from the project the Town rejected at the January 14<sup>th</sup> Special Town Meeting?**

**Mandatory Hook-ups** – Mandatory hook-ups will be limited to the Rural Development funded project area. Ordinance currently requires mandatory hook-ups district-wide, which raises concerns with residents outside the project area with regard to future expansion.

**Well Decommissioning** – The well decommissioning requirement will be limited to the 20 contaminated or at risk wells. Home and business owners on public water with non-contaminated or at risk wells, can still use their wells for non-sanitary purposes (e.g. watering the garden).

There can be no cross connections in buildings with both a private well and public water.

**Exemptions** – There will be a full agricultural exemption.

**Non-contaminated or At Risk Service Connections** – the 28 non-contaminated or at-risk wells will be fully connected (~ \$800 x 28 = \$22,400)

**Will the water be chlorinated?**

- The water supplied by the fairgrounds well is from a deep aquifer. It has been rigorously tested and is high quality.
- However, when the water system goes online, it will be disinfected to ensure the absence of bacteria in the waterlines. Following initial disinfection, the water will be tested for bacteria monthly for the first 6 months. If the water tests negative for bacteria, no further disinfection will be required. If it tests positive during this time, some further disinfection will be required. After six months, the bacteria testing requirement will change to quarterly. If bacteria levels exceed standards during testing, the District will only treat on an as needed basis. This low level of chlorine would be difficult to discern at the tap.

**Will fluoride be added to the water?**

No.