

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a "Betterment"?

- i. Massachusetts General Law Chapter 83, Section 1, allows the Town to construct and maintain sewer systems for the public convenience and public health.
- ii. MGL Chapter 83, Section 11, allows the Board of Health to order the abutters to connect to the common sewer.
- iii. MGL Chapter 83, Section 14, allows the Town to assess cost of the common sewer construction to those receiving benefit.
- iv. MGL Chapter 80, Section 1 allows for Betterments to be assessed for improvements to a limited or determinable area that receives the benefit.

2. What is the "Wastewater Facilities Plan"?

A requirement of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, for towns look at their wastewater needs in a comprehensive and coordinated view to provide sewer needs while protecting the aquifer.

3. What is a Gravity Sewer?

A sewer pipe laid with a constant down hill slope so waste moves under its own mass.

4. What is a Low Pressure Sewer?

Small diameter pipe generally 2-1/2" to 6" in diameter, installed in shallow trenches (5 Ft. deep) in roadways that follow the slope of ground. Properties connected to low-pressure sewers must have individual grinder pumps that provide pressure or force to move waste through the pipe.

5. What is a Grinder Pump?

Self-contained pumping unit located underground between the building and the low-pressure sewer main in the street. Unit collect waste from the house grinds the waste into slurry and forces it into the town owned low-pressure pipe. Pump has storage capacity for about 100 gallons of waste.

6. What is a Pump Station?

When gravity sewer mains reach a depth below the elevation of the Sewer Treatment Plant, pump stations are installed to raise or lift the sewerage and discharge it through a Force Main to an elevation where it can again flow to the treatment plant by gravity or to another Pump Station.

7. What is a Force Main?

Small diameter pipe generally 4" to 6" in diameter that carries sewage under high pressure. Sewage is collected at pump stations from gravity or low-pressure systems and forced up hill to the treatment plant. Properties abutting a force main cannot be connected directly to the force main without building a Pump Station as mentioned above.

8. Why can't I connect to a force main?

Waste flows in a force main at such high volume and pressure that connections can only be made to a Force Main at a Pump Station. Grinder pumps or gravity sewers are not powerful enough to overcome the pressure in a force main.

9. What is a House Connection?

The house connection is the name given to the sewer pipe that connects the home to the town sewer in the street. Generally the house connection flows by gravity towards the street. This varies depending on the topography of the individual house lot and its relationship to the street. The property owner is completely responsible for the installation and cost of the House Connection.

10. Who assesses the betterments?

The Town prepares an order that is recorded in the registry of deeds that declares the amount of each betterment assessed to each property in the affected area.

11. How are betterments paid?

Betterments are generally paid in a lump sum or over a 20 year period and are attached to the property tax bill. The property owner has the option to declare the term, up to twenty years or number of payments they desire to make.

12. Is there any savings to me in paying the lump sum payment?

Yes, interest charges can be saved by paying the betterment upon receipt of the bill.

13. What if the Board of health grants me a variance and I don't have to connect to the new sewer will I still be charged Betterment?

Yes, the betterment is your share of the construction cost. You are responsible for that cost regardless of when you connect to the sewer.

14. I just constructed a new septic system; will I need to connect to the sewer once it is constructed?

Unless the Board of Health grants a variance, all properties on roadway ways receiving the sewer must connect to the sewer.

15. Will the water supplier install water mains at the same time as the sewer is being installed?

Yes, water line replace is planned in coordination with the sewer installation project.

16. How will condominium buildings or units be assessed a betterment? Each Condominium within a complex will be assessed as individual dwelling units.

17. What is the formula for assessing betterments?

Presently each property eligible to be connected to the public sewer will be assessed a betterment by dwelling unit.

18. What will happen when we lose power during snow storms and hurricanes? Each grinder pump has the capacity to store about one day's accumulation of waste. Each installation will have an electrical outlet installed that will accept a connection to a generator. The property owner also has the option of installing a larger capacity holding tank at the time of the installation.

19. Can old septic tanks be used as an overflow/storage for grinder pump users during a power failure?

You would need the permission from the Board of Health to keep the old septic tank. Current policy requires the old tank to be pumped clean and filled or removed.

20. What expenses am I, the home owner, responsible for?

There are three basic expenses that the property owner is responsible for.

i. Betterment cost. Includes construction cost and any finance fees.

ii. House connection. Cost of permitting and constructing your house connection to the sewer pipe in the street.

iii. Sewer Use Fee. Annual cost of maintaining the Town sewer system and treating waste at the Water Treatment Plant. This fee is based on water consumption.

21. When will construction begin on this sewer system?
We anticipate that construction will commence in the spring of 2010.

22. I have a bathroom/washing machine in my basement will I need a pump?

In December 2003 we sent out a questionnaire to all the properties within this area seeking information about the depth and location of sewer pipes in the buildings. The designer used this information to place pipes at proper depths in the street to collect waste. However, some properties might have to use a grinder pump to lift waste to the sewer pipe in the street because of the topography of the property.

23. What is the difference between a sewer system and a septic system?

A sewer system, such as what is planned for this area, collects and transports the waste to a central treatment plant where it is treated before the effluent is returned to the groundwater. Waste is highly treated, solids are removed, and flow is aerated and chlorinated, removing most organic matter before it is pumped to sand filter beds where it percolates into the ground well below Massachusetts and Federal drinking water standards.

Septic systems or on-site disposal systems are self contained systems that treat wastewater from individual residential properties. These systems include a septic tank that removes solids and grease from the flow. The flow then passes through a distribution box to a leaching facility where the effluent percolates into the ground.

The big difference between the two systems is that the Septic System removes solids but relies on the soil in the ground to breakdown organic matter before it reaches the ground water. Septic systems are ineffective in removing phosphates and nitrates which degrade down stream sensitive receptors.