TIVERTON WASTEWATER DISTRICT *Frequently Asked Questions*

1) Who is responsible for the TWWD? Is it the Town Council?

TWWD is a separate entity from the Town of Tiverton created through RI General Law 14LA-162 An Act To Create and Establish the Tiverton Wastewater District (TWWD). TWWD is governed by a board of directors and not the Town Council. The current board is comprised of the Commissioners of the former Tiverton Wastewater Management Commission, who were appointed by the Town Council. Going forward, as terms expire, the board will be elected by customers of the district at an annual meeting.

2) Is this particular quasi-governmental agency set up similar to all of the other quasi-governmental agencies in RI?

Every Quasi-Municipal agency has its own unique set of circumstances and its own legislation. However, they all are established through the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island and the legislative process. TWWD was established in the same way. When crafting the legislation, examples of both Rhode Island utility districts and those from other areas around New England were used as a model. Therefore, TWWD's enabling legislation closely resembles other quasi-municipal agencies in Rhode Island.

3) Does the TWWD have enforcement of current ISDS regulations or will it in the future in the areas within the District bounds?

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management sets policy and is responsible for enforcement of ISDS regulations. TWWD is the Town's resource for implementation of Article 18 of the Tiverton Town Code of Ordinances.

4) The TWWD needs a web page with real dollar costs for construction, grant money available, costs of fees and taxes projected out several years. The people need to be better informed.

TWWD's web page is www.twwd.org. We plan to use this website to provide as much information as possible as the project moves forward and information becomes available.

5) When the Fall River Waste Water Treatment Facility was built, it was supposed to be a regional facility including Tiverton. Why does Tiverton pay more for disposal than does Fall River for use if this is a regional facility?

The Fall River Waste Water Treatment (WWTF) is a regional facility used by the city of Fall River and surrounding towns. At that time the facility was built, the town of Tiverton chose not to contribute to the cost of construction. The Town of Tiverton, as well as the Towns of Freetown and Westport, use this facility through an inter-municipal agreement. This agreement sets higher usage rates for those districts outside of Fall River.Per the inter-municipal agreement, rates are set by the facility and subject to approval by the Fall River City Council and Mayor. Usage rates for Tiverton increase/decrease at the same percentage as the rates in Fall River.

6) What is the capacity of the Fall River Treatment Facility?

Monthly flow average is 20 MGD. Design flow is 30.9 MGD (million gallons per day). Peak wet weather flow is 106 MGD and only used during significant storms.

7) How will the TWWD hold down the costs with the Fall River Treatment Facility as far as the cost of pumping to it?

Pump stations are monitored on a regular basis and regular preventative maintenance is performed in order to maintain the collections system in good working order and ensure that all equipment is operating efficiently. In addition, as more homeowners are tied in, the system will actually run more efficiently; ensuring less buildup of debris in the pumps and piping, removing potential odor, and reducing inefficient pump conditions, saving electricity.

8) Will they be able to cut us off if this goes through or if use goes up in Fall River?

The Fall River WWTF has a capacity of 30.9 MGD (average design flow). Federal and State regulations state that once a wastewater treatment facility has a monthly average flow of 80 percent of its capacity for three consecutive months, a planning process is required to begin. Typically, the planning process will review future build-out projections and flows, address the need for additional treatment capacity, efforts to reduce infiltration/inflow, etc. This planning process will lead to the implementation of improvements required to handle existing and future wastewater flows received at the wastewater treatment facility. In addition, the TWWD has an Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) with the City of Fall River that includes the ability to discharge up to 2 MGD of wastewater into the City's collection system.

9) When the excavation starts in the Bay Street area where there is known to be contaminated soils, who will pay for the increased costs of this excavation and removal?

Removal of contaminated soil is complicated and costly. Further, the issue of funding removal of contamination remains an open issue. Because of this, TWWD has determined that expansion of sewer mains in the Bay Street area will not be included in the first year construction plan. Instead, a Bay Street Neighborhood work group will be formed to sort through these issues and to put together an acceptable plan to deal with the contamination. The work group will consist of 2 residents from the Bay Street Neighborhood, representatives of the Town of Tiverton government, representatives of the TWWD board, a representative from DEM, and a septic system professional. We will be working over the next several months to create this group and begin working on these issues.

10) Define the area of the district.

The current district consists of a sewer interceptor that runs along Bay Street and the railroad tracks on the western side of North Tiverton from the Fall River town line to the southern edge of the Villages on Mt. Hope Bay condominium development. The interceptor then runs east to the top of the hill on Souza Road. A force main from a pumping station at the Tiverton Industrial Park will pump sewage from Industrial Way to the interceptor in Souza Road. Some lateral sewers have been tied into the interceptor. These include spurs on Ford Farm Road, Horizon Drive, Trailer Avenue and the force main for Sakonnet Bay Manor. In the northeastern corner of town, Countryview Estates, off of Hurst Lane is sewered. Wastewater from this development flows to a pumping station on Hurst Lane and is pumped into the Fall River collection system on Hancock Street.

11) What areas will be included in the expansion?

At the February 3rd, 2015 TWWD Board meeting, the board voted on the areas to be included in the first year construction area based on not exceeding $7.1 M in USDA Grants/Loans. Mapping of areas to be included in the first year expansion construction will be provided through the twwd.org website and through public outreach programs in the next few months.

12) What is the time line for the first year construction area?

Following a favorable vote (consisting of majority of a proposed service area electing to be included in the Tiverton Wastewater District), a detailed design, bidding and construction schedule will be developed. The schedule will vary based upon many factors, but the following is a typical duration of the various phases:

1. Design Phase – up to 12 months
2. Bidding Phase – up to 3 months
3. Construction Phase – up to 12 to 15 months

The time line shown for each phase are estimates which will be updated once the actual service area to be designed and constructed is known.

13) Before the scheduled vote in 2015, will there be another informational meeting for the public put on by the TWWD? Will this meeting include the costs and other issues concerning the District?

On February 3, 2015 the TWWD Board voted to finalize the first year construction area. Those that own property in the proposed construction areas will be notified of the public meeting schedule by TWWD. At these public meetings, TWWD will provide property owners with complete information on time frame and cost.

14) What is the voting process? Who is allowed to vote? How will the district handle those that own multiple properties in the district? When will the voting occur?

The voting process will be discussed by the TWWD Board at the February 18, 2015 meeting.

16) If the residents of an area vote no and the pipe goes by your house to get to another area can you tie into it?

If an areas declines to move forward with sewers via a vote, the project for that particular area will not move forward. If pipe from other area is available, residents can work with TWWD to see if a tie-in is feasible and the specific costs to tie-in will be determined at that time.

17) Will there be any coordination with other utilities, like gas and electric, to install their utilities in the same trench when the work is done?

During the design phase, TWWD will contact other utilities to confirm if they have any planned upgrades or expansions of their facilities within a project area and will coordinate any utility company construction in a project area to optimize economy and efficiency of construction within the work areas.

18) What are the specific costs in total for this proposed sewer line if it comes into your neighborhood?

Estimated costs for creating the infrastructure of the proposed sewer line are made of up several components and fall into two categories: public construction assessment (work done on public streets and public rights of way) and private construction assessment (work done on to connect individual homes to the public lines). As of February 2015, we are developing our final estimated project costs based on determining which specific homes will be included in the first year funding. We will be conducting public education meetings to present the 'not-to-exceed' costs that voters will consider in the coming months.

Initial fees for construction and tie-in have been referred to as *Betterment fees but are more accurately described as an Assessment*. At the time of voting, the district will announce a "not-to-exceed" cost for the project. The exact assessment will be determined upon completion of the construction but will not exceed the cost voted on.

Currently, the town charges an additional $2,700.00 *"betterment fee"* to those tying into the system. In the coming months, TWWD will review this view and others with the hopes of being able to reduce them.

Once tied in, users are assessed *an operations, maintenance, and administration fee (OMA)*, typically $150/year for a single family home. This fee covers the total cost of running the District including administrative expenses, capital expenditures, ongoing maintenance and monitoring of the infrastructure including pump stations, sewer lines, manholes and equipment that is within the district. This does not cover any costs for the Fall River treatment plant.

TWWD has secured grant and loan funding through the USDA, which will allow for these fees to be amortized over 40 years.

Usage fees, based on water usage, are charged for wastewater sent to the Fall River plant for treatment. TWWD charges this fee based on a pass-through of the rate from the City of Fall River.

Currently, Fall River charges a one time *Connection Fee*, which has previously been referred to as a Bedroom fee. This fee is calculated by a formula and equates to roughly $1,100.00 for a two-bedroom home and $1,650.00 for a three-bedroom home. There is a proposed new inter-municipal agreement that would do away with this fee for existing properties and significantly reduce the cost for new properties. The connection fee would be $1.00/gallon based on flow projections. This would reduce the cost for a typical single family, three-bedroom home from the current $550.00 to $330.00. We expect that this proposal will be heard and decided upon in the next three to six months.

19) How much will the DPW, Fire Department, Police Department, and Town pay for a assessment if additional public properties?

Currently, DPW, North Tiverton Fire and the Police Department are already tied to sewer and pay both OMA (operations, maintenance, and administration) fees as well as usage fees. If additional town properties need to connect to sewer in the future, they will pay the appropriate assessment fees for the project at that time.

20) Will there be a sewer tax?

While TWWD has the authority to charge a sewer tax under our enabling legislation, there are no plans to impose a sewer tax. The operational expenses of the District as well as the proposed sewer expansion are fully funded through existing revenue from users and the USDA grant/loan program.

21) How much federal money is involved in this District?

For year one, TWWD has a pending loan and grant package for $7.1 million for construction and expansion of the system.

22) How will areas not included in the proposed first year construction area be added to the district? When will this happen?

Each year, the Tiverton Wastewater District will identify a proposed system expansion area based on current local and state regulations and the 2013 Tiverton Wastewater Facility Plan Update. The availability of grants and loans will be explored and a proposed scope with estimated costs will be presented to the property owners located within the proposed system expansion area. Based on this information, expansion of the District into the proposed area will only occur if a majority of the property owners favor being included in the District.

23) Why do the people who already have a sewer line running by their property from the existing sewer line have to pay the betterment fees?

Currently, the town charges a "betterment fee" of $2,700.00 on top of the cost of construction to cover when someone wanted to tie-in to the system to cover administrative costs. In the coming months, TWWD will review this fee and others with an eye on reducing them.

24) Why aren't cluster systems being looked at as an option in areas like Bay Street?

Cluster systems were initially looked at but because of various reasons were not further considered. These reasons included: lack of suitable land area; high ground water conditions; poor soil types notability bedrock; and impact due to high potential for discovery of hazardous waste. In addition, as part of the cluster system, a collection system would still be required, making the option for a cluster system more costly than connection into the existing Mount Hope Bay interceptor.

25) The costs of a septic system vs the proposed costs for the sewer lines are not being clearly defined or fairly represented. Please respond.

TWWD believes it has provided a fair overview of the costs for septic and the related costs for sewer systems. In April 2013 the Tiverton Wastewater Management Commission, prepared a brochure titled Sewer Construction Program: Septic vs. Town Sewer System, Understanding the Costs Associated with Wastewater Disposal. This was a piece of literature that explained the difference in how sewer vs. a septic system worked and the related costs.

For septic systems, we presented a range of 5 specific scenarios, each with a different site condition ranging from a traditional system on preferred conditions to an Advanced Treatment System with less favorable conditions. The costs for these scenarios ranged from $15,000 to $25,000. We also included one example of an Advanced Treatment System on a difficult site that could cost up to $50,000. Given the conditions in many of the areas we are looking at, including proximity to the water, it is likely that a subset of homeowners would be required to install such a system. It is our responsibility to show the full range of potential costs so that homeowners may make an informed decision.

For sewer, we identified a range of betterment costs as well as existing costs for ongoing usage based on the preliminary engineering report and the parameters of the grant from the USDA.
As we define the specific areas that will be part of the first year funding, we will confirm our numbers and provide a 'not-to-exceed' dollar amount for the sewer project for consideration. Any vote to join the district and move forward, would be based on a defined 'not-to-exceed' budget.

26) Why are people who have systems that have passed inspection and are still fully functional that are 25 years old or more being forced to tie in? Who determined that age?

Although there is no way to predict exactly how long an on-site system will last, articles/resources from various state environmental regulators indicate that a properly designed and operated system generally lasts between 20 to 30 years. Thus, the average age of 25 years was used. Causes of failure include improper design or construction, poor maintenance, improper use, and environmental conditions beyond the control of the user. Poor maintenance includes failure to regularly pump the entire contents of the septic tank and conducting routine system inspections. Improper use includes discharging to the septic system any garbage disposal wastes, grease, feminine products, bleach, medications, and harmful chemicals among other things. Conditions beyond the control of the user include high groundwater, poor soils. In addition, systems designed 25 years ago, were designed under a different set of standards for treating wastewater. Today's standards are much more stringent in terms of what we expect and require the systems to do. Systems that were designed and constructed 25 years ago allow more nutrients such as nitrogen to flow into the water causing harmful effects to the water. Therefore, while the system may pass inspection in terms of functioning properly for what it was originally designed to do, it does not meet to today's standards for properly treating wastewater.

The following answers were provided by representatives of the Town of Tiverton:

1. Where do the revenues generated from the project made possible by the TIF bond for the sewer interceptor go, assuming those proceeds are above and beyond the requirements of the bond?

Any revenues generated from the Starwoods project and any other construction made possible by the sewer interceptor funded by the Tax Increment Financing (TIF), to the extent that they exceed the annual debt service of the bond, are used for the public purposes of the Town, an are not earmarked for sewer projects or construction.

2. Why doesn't the Town as a whole support the sewer project financially?

The Town as a whole is too large to participate in the USDA program that supports sewer development. The district is an appropriate size and has other qualifications that allow it to borrow money at highly favorable rates in order to complete the project. Also, there is widespread consensus that many who would not benefit directly from the creation of a sewer system would not support it financially or in a town wide vote.

3. Will property taxes go up as a result of an area being sewered?

In general, no. There really isn't any evidence that indicates that properties that have public sewers vs. private septic/cesspools are sold at a higher value. While some personal preference would impact the number of people interested in a property, those who don't put any premium on public sewers would pay the same amount for a sewered home vs. one that is not. "