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TWO SECTIONS • 75¢

Deltaville sewer would need county subsidies

by Tom Chillemi

Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) has offered to perform another sewer service feasibility study—this time the focus will be only on Deltaville.

The next move is up to the Middlesex County Board of Supervisors (BOS), which may ultimately have to decide if it wants the county to subsidize a sewer system. "Sewer is a losing proposition without subsidies," HRSD general manager Ted Henifin told supervisors at their January 11 meeting.

"On the shelf"

In 2014 HRSD studied five areas of the county designated as potential sewer service areas by the BOS. They include Deltaville, Hartfield, Harmony Village, Saluda-Cooks Corner, and Jamaica.

"High unit costs of the areas studied have left further review, study or expenditure on Middlesex projects on the shelf," said Henifin. "Without county funding, none will move forward."

Preliminary cost estimates for a collection system in Deltaville is \$13 million.

— Ted Henifin, HRSD

The next sewer study would focus on Deltaville in anticipation of a proposed drinking water system being built, said Henifin.

Not self-funding

Preliminary numbers demonstrate a Deltaville sewer project would not be self-funding, said Henifin. "It will require the county fronting money and significant subsidies to make it work."

The 2014 study included an underground "drip disposal" of the treated

(See Sewer, page A8)

Sewer in Deltaville . . . (Continued from page A1)

wastewater. The estimated construction cost alone would be from \$15,000 to \$60,000 per dwelling unit. That would add between \$62 to \$250 to a dwelling's monthly bill for 20 years, just to repay construction costs.

The study also looked at the option of Deltaville and Hartfield connecting to the Mathews sewer line that runs along Route 198. That cost would be \$24,000 per dwelling, said Henifin.

Preliminary cost estimates for a collection system in Deltaville are \$13 million. That's \$22,000 per connection just to pay for construction costs, and equals \$45 per month per dwelling for 40 years.

HRSD does not build collection systems; that is done by government or an authority.

Added to the \$13 million collection system is \$7 million that HRSD would spend for the treatment plant and a limited number of "interceptor" pipes near the plant.

Assuming there were 600 connections, said Henifin, the annual revenue would be \$280,000, barely enough to cover the cost of the treatment plant construction, which would be more than \$230,000 annually "without" interest. "The project is too small and

too expensive to pay for itself," said Henifin. "It will require additional funds by local government and HRSD."

Later in the meeting, he added, "We need as much flow as we can get."

Next steps

Among the next steps, said Henifin, is for HRSD to hire Bowman Consulting to perform a preliminary engineering report (PER), which would give detailed estimates of costs. (Bowman Consulting also has been hired by the Middlesex Water Authority and is currently studying how to bring central drinking water to Deltaville.)

Henifin said the 2014 study cost \$46,000, and the proposed study would cost \$50,000. "Before we jump to a PER," Henifin told the BOS, "we want some commitment by the county that if this doesn't lead to a project, that you would pay us back."

Henifin said the memo of understanding between the BOS and HRSD would state that if the sewer project does not move forward in two years after the study is completed, the county would repay HRSD the costs of the study.

The BOS directed that a draft agreement from HRSD be on

the agenda for the February 7 BOS meeting.

Middlesex County Administrator Matt Walker asked Henifin if the study could include the Hartfield area and the possibility of connecting to the Mathews sewer line.

Henifin said the study would determine if it is cheaper to run a line to Mathews or use drip irrigation, which could be on farmland through easements. The irrigation pipes are buried 18 inches.

Henifin said he would prefer to study Deltaville first, but Hartfield could be added to the scope of the PER. The longer run would require a "forced main" and a "grinder pump" at a cost of \$5,000 to \$10,000 per customer.

Pinetop District supervisor Chip Holt asked about the feasibility of building a vacuum line to serve a subdivision if a main sewer line goes by it.

"The cost is challenging," responded Henifin.

Ken Baybutt of HRSD told the BOS that mandatory connections are not permitted with USDA loans.

Walker noted those outside of the designated sewer service area who want to connect would need to get permission from the BOS to obtain service.