



Water Supply and Treatment Bond

Town of Hinesburg

10632 Route 116 Hinesburg VT 05461

802.482.2281 | hinesburg.org

Frequently Asked Questions, Part II

Bond Vote - November 4, 2014

The questions below represent those asked following the publication of the first “FAQs” and the series of Front Porch Forum postings.

Q: What happens to the existing wells?

A: The existing wells will remain connected to the system. The pumps and other equipment will be “exercised” to ensure that water is accessible in an emergency situation. Otherwise, the wells will not be utilized. With the development and connection of an additional water source or sources the existing wells can be disconnected.

Q: What will the total permitted capacity of the new wells be?

A: Between 200 and 240 gallons per minute. The permitted capacity is the total amount of water that would be available to water system users, both current and future.

Q: Is there a minimum water charge?

A: The minimum water charge is currently \$72 per quarter, or \$288 per year. The minimum charge is incorporated into the \$498 per year average water bill used in the ratepayer impact estimate. There is also a minimum charge for wastewater, billed at the same time as water. The minimum charge for wastewater is \$80.59 per quarter, or \$322 per year.

Q: Will sewer rates be affected by the water bond?

A: No.

Q: Could a development project drill its own well, if there isn't sufficient capacity or the capability to connect to the water system?

A: Possibly. Connection to, “an adequate municipal water line” is mandated by the Town’s water use ordinance. The State’s moratorium on new connections makes the municipal water line inadequate. If the Town is unable to provide water via its municipal system, and if a well can be drilled, then it is theoretically possible for a project to proceed in the water service area while the State’s moratorium on new connections exists.

Q: Is there a plan to find an additional water source or sources to meet current and/or projected needs?

A: The Town is identifying additional potential sources for water, focusing first in the areas nearest the proposed wells. In June 2013, Aldrich and Elliott provided the Town with a water source feasibility study which identified and analyzed potential sites. The feasibility study is available at www.hinesburg.org.

Q: When thinking about the Town's water supply needs for the long-term, should the Town consider connecting to the Champlain Water District?

A: The 2013 water source feasibility study referenced above included costs to connect to the Champlain Water District (CWD). Connecting to CWD infrastructure on Dorset Street was estimated to cost nearly \$11 million. The Town, if it did connect, would also pay CWD's wholesale rate for water. The wholesale water rate was \$1.84 per gallon at the time of the study.

Q: Can the Town change either the bond type or the bond amount prior to the vote?

A: No. A municipality can either hold the vote as proposed or rescind the vote and begin again.

Q: Is the additional capacity only for new development?

A: No. The additional capacity also enables redevelopment activities, such as those underway at the Cheese Plant. The Select Board, when considering an allocation fee for new development, may also consider establishing a water capacity reserve – effectively holding some of the “new” capacity aside for future projects. A reserve has been established for wastewater capacity.

Q: If this project is about current water system capacity and needs, will there be an opportunity to discuss proposed growth in the village?

A: Yes. The Planning Commission is starting the Town Plan revision process. The zoning regulations, in turn, are informed by the Town Plan. While water and wastewater allocation policies and ordinances can be useful tools in controlling the scope and speed of growth and development, what ultimately happens is determined by the Town Plan and zoning regulations. The Planning Commission has a forum on growth in Hinesburg scheduled for 7 p.m. on Wednesday, November 12th in the Main Hall of Town Hall.

Q: Didn't the Town do a \$7 million water project 14 or 15 years ago?

A: No. The project was a \$2.7 million project, which included the acquisition of one of the current wells, whose capacity has diminished over the years.

Q: Will there be more discussion on treatment?

A: Yes. The Select Board will be discussing treatment in the coming months. This discussion will center on whether or not to retain treatment as part of the project, as well as what type of treatment system would be employed if treatment remains. The bond vote seeks authorization to borrow \$1.5 million for the project – the amount spent could always be less.

Q: Is there MTBE contamination in the new wells?

A: No.

Q: Has treatment to remove MTBE contamination from the current wells been considered?

A: MTBE contamination is one of two issues with the existing wells, with the primary issue the reduction in capacity. To increase capacity in the current wells risks worsening the level of contamination, and previous capacity redevelopment efforts did not significantly improve the production of the well. Treatment for MTBE in and of itself would not solve the Town's supply problems if the capacity remains less than what is needed to meet current demand.