
TOWN OF FALMOUTH, MEMORANDUM

TO: NATHAN POORE
FROM: PETE CLARK
SUBJECT: WOODLANDS VILLAS, COUNCIL CONSIDERATION OF ACCEPTING THE PRIVATE SEWER
DATE: 1/28/13
CC: U67-098

Woodlands Villas homeowners have requested the Town consider accepting the private sewer system within their development and the responsibility for all future system operation and maintenance. Should the Town Council be willing to consider their request, I offer the following discussion for you and the Council which I hope adequately details the background and authority questions you raised.

System description:

The Villas adjoin the separate Woodlands Development and consists of a mix of 50 properties comprised of approximately 33 condominium units and 17 individual lots. Development of the property began around 2000 and it is mostly built out. These properties are currently served by both private and public sewer. Most of the properties connect to sections of the privately maintained sewer lines with 10 properties connecting directly to our public sewer within the Woodland's complex. Despite connecting directly to Town sewer and not benefitting from the private sewer, these 10 lots apparently also share in the cost of upkeep of the private sewer as part of the condo association.

The private sewer system is complete. Based on our preliminary inspection, the overall condition of the system is good. It appears that the stations have been regularly maintained. I would estimate that the original cost for the infrastructure was \$250,000 to \$350,000.

The system generally consists of:

- three, duplex submersible pump stations with precast concrete wet wells
- sections of 2" pvc force main from each of the 3 stations, totaling approximately 1,200'
- approximately 2,100' of 8" gravity sewer
- 12 precast concrete manholes

Other private systems in Falmouth:

Aside from the Villas, there are currently 5 other satellite sewer systems in Falmouth that are privately maintained. These include:

- Colonial Village, a complex consisting of 72 residential units with approximately 1,200 linear feet of gravity sewer and no pump stations or pressure sewer.
- Foreside Commons, 62 units with approximately 1,500' of gravity sewer, 1 private pump station, and 400' of pressure sewer.
- Mackworth Island, one State and 3 private schools served by 1,400' of gravity sewer, 1 pump station, and 3,600' of pressure sewer, much of which is beneath tidal flats between the Island and mainland.

- Oceanview, portions of the Oceanview complex are served by privately maintained sewer infrastructure. Within the complex, certain units drain to private pump stations off Blueberry Lane and gravity sewer within the private Whipple and Homestead Lanes.
- Ridgewood, this ongoing project consists of approximately 75 lots, 16 of which are currently built. When fully developed, the private sewer within the development would include approximately 2,800' of gravity sewer, 3 pump stations, and 3,200' of pressure sewer.

Do Towns have a “model” for acceptance?

From limited review of ordinances and discussion with other officials, it appears that most towns have mechanisms in place that address extensions of public sewers, but that “after the fact” acceptance of private sewer is generally a case by case evaluation that usually involves a decision by the granting authority with or without a formal recommendation by either the engineer or superintendent. Not to say that there aren't any, but limited review did not find a specific “procedure” directed solely towards accepting private sewer, and it does seem fairly common from discussion that the same standards and procedures that would be applied in granting an “extension” are used in many towns.

Operational and capital aspects of the Villas request:

Operation of the Villas' private system is currently managed by a designee of the Homeowners Association and a contract vendor who performs semi-annual preventive work and responds to correct problems.

The primary reasoning behind the group's request that the Town assume the system is based on the recognition that the normal activities of the sewer department would better insure that the system is well operated, more closely monitored, and perhaps repaired in a more timely fashion. If the Town would accept the sewer, the homeowners group would incur the cost for needed upgrades to bring the system to town standards but would relieve themselves of ongoing future costs and the responsibility for the system.

Certainly the sewer department would have some added cost to operate and maintain the system. Those costs are primarily related to the three pump stations from an operational view and eventual equipment or system replacement costs from the maintenance aspect, typical of any addition to our system.

The added operations cost basically consists of electrical cost for the three stations which is estimated to be around \$500 per year based on information from the Villas. There is also added labor for routine weekly station checks that would add perhaps an hour to our route and any needed maintenance, which will vary. Aspects of the sewer ordinance apply conditions of acceptance that are necessary to make sure the system is in good repair, eliminate the need for near term improvements or major repairs, and consequently address near term maintenance or capital exposure. Long term capital set aside is estimated in the following table at approximately \$8,500 annually, if fully funded.

Villas, simple value/set aside estimate					
	Quantity	Value each	Estimated value	Life	Annual
Pumps	2	\$4,000	\$8,000	15	\$533
Pumps	2	\$5,000	\$10,000	15	\$667
Pumps	2	\$6,000	\$12,000	15	\$800
Pump control	3	\$12,000	\$36,000	20	\$1,800
Station structures	3	\$30,000	\$90,000	75	\$1,200
Manholes	12	\$1,500	\$18,000	75	\$240
Gravity sewer	2100	\$50	\$105,000	100	\$1,050
Force main	1200	\$45	\$54,000	100	\$540
New telemetry	3	\$11,000	\$33,000	20	\$1,650
TOTAL			\$333,000		\$8,480

Council consideration:

Prior Town Councils have accepted the once private sewers within developments such as Baysite, Applegate, and Falmouth on the Green.

The town Sewer Ordinance provides that extensions of the public sewer may be allowed by the Town Council and includes that “*property owners, builders or developers may request permission from the town council to construct the sewer extension*”, and that the “*council may grant or deny the request as it deems to be in the best interest of the town and may impose such reasonable conditions as it deems necessary to protect the interests of the town*”. While this language seems more suitably applied to new extensions, it and other ordinance provisions have formed the basis for past acceptance of private infrastructure as part of the municipal system.

In the case of existing infrastructure, conditions of acceptance are important considerations. The ordinance provides that acceptance of a private extension requires a one year guarantee and a complete set of as-built plans. For compatibility, the system would require upgrades, most notably alarm telemetry from the three pump stations. Easements and conveyance documents acceptable to our counsel would need to be developed. These subjects have been raised in preliminary discussions, along with requirements that the system be inspected for defects consisting of such items as pump capacity evaluation, electrical code compliance, and televised inspection of the gravity sewer for defects. Pertinent documentation of these evaluations would be prepared for review and any necessary repairs made prior to final acceptance. The homeowners have agreed by letter to these prerequisites.

Final acceptance:

If the Council conditionally agreed to accept the Villas’ sewer into the public system, the sewer ordinance also provides that “*All sewer extensions, including pumping stations, constructed by the property owner, builder or developer after final approval of the sewer superintendent, shall become the property of the town within a time period of six (6) months and shall thereafter be maintained by the town.*”

Consequently, the final acceptance of the system and incorporation into the public system falls within the responsibilities of the sewer superintendent, although the Council could certainly retain that role as they see fit.

Please let me know if I could provide anything additional.