

Water

Continued from page one

rule more equitable.

Penalties for violations

The regulation on the rebate was to have expired last May, but because funds remain in the rebate account and many property owners have not converted to low-water-use toilets, the rebate has been extended. The councilors had previously determined that they have the authority to shut off water to those properties that do not convert to water-saving devices.

As of Aug. 15, more than half of the 680 municipal water customers had not completed required water-saving retrofits for their toilets. Customers will be served with notices, included with the Sept. 30 water bill, that give them 60 days, to Nov. 29, to install a water saving toilet or have their water turned off.

The town has enough money to give 225 rebates of \$50 and one \$40 rebate on a first-come, first-served basis among those who complete the task before Nov. 29. Those who do not complete the work in time will be deemed violators, subject to water shut off and a possible fine, although the amount of the fine has not been specified.

Of the remaining 389 customers, a dozen or two have completed the work and are due rebates but the inspections have not yet been completed or recorded. The remaining more than 300 who must comply will be competing for the limited rebate money. Once the rebate money is gone, the others still must comply or face a water shutoff.

Open forum

The only person at the meeting, Valerie Molloy of Columbia

Avenue, did not speak on the regulation change, but during the open forum portion of the meeting, she asked a question. She said that she asked a public works crew about the nature of a fire alarm while they were near her house, and they said they did not know because they do not have radio contact with emergency services. She said that concerned her, especially because of factors of no or limited major communications in New Orleans during the recent Hurricane Katrina disaster. "What would happen to us in a disaster?" she asked.

Police Chief Thomas Tighe, serving as interim town administrator, assured her that the police have the technical ability to activate contact with public works staff, as well as all other appropriate personnel in cases of emergency. He also said that town personnel has plans and training for procedures to follow in case of major emergencies, including the need for evacuation.

Connection fees

The councilors discussed, but agreed not to vote on, new connection fees that they have been discussing in recent months. Public Works Director Steven Goslee, who is away this week for a professional conference, gave a written report that the current \$2,000 fee for new water hookups does not always cover actual costs. The councilors said existing customers should not be subsidizing these new customers. Goslee's report said that practices elsewhere in the state include connection fees of \$3,000 plus new service fees of \$1,500.

The councilors said any change should provide a formula that charges the actual costs of connection, including but not limited to trench digging and pavement replacement. Goslee had previously

advised that connections in state roads are more expensive because the state has more requirements about the road work. The councilors also noted that costs vary depending on conditions ranging from loose or sandy soil to bedrock that requires drilling.

Councilors reviewed theories about adding charges for new service. Some thought that actual water-use fees probably covered this item, although they said they would further consider that there might be a charge that in effect would be for the "privilege" of being able to connect to the municipal water system.

Goslee's report referred to "the theory that a cost is associated with the increase in capacity to service a unit or structure. Fees are attributed to costs for raw water, treatment and storage and distribution." He recommended, "It is in the best interest of the department to adopt fees that are more in line with actual costs than our current fee schedule. The fees should be held in the infrastructure replacement fund for use on capital projects."

Reports

The councilors received several written monthly updates on all water and sewer activities from Goslee.

He said the plans for the renovations at the wastewater treatment plant at Taylor Point are complete and ready to be sent to the state Department of Environmental Management for approval. He expects approval in time to put the plans out for bid next month, he said.

Goslee said he is awaiting written material from Joseph and Harriet Mistowski who hold the lease for the town-owned golf course, where a special filter is needed in order to continue using

effluent from the wastewater treatment plant to water the golf course greens. The town is asking the Mistowskis to participate in the cost of the filter as part of the terms of their lease agreement with the town. Goslee said the filter would be part of the specifications for the bid as an alternate to be accepted or rejected at the time of the contract decision. Councilors asked Tighe to get them data about the lease renewal options and schedule.

The golf course used to be overseen by a council-appointed committee, but in recent years, it has been under the direct supervision of the town administration in conjunction with the council itself.

Water plant

Goslee's report detailed more activities involving plans for the new water treatment plant on North Main Road at the Great Creek. He said a final location for the new building within the site is still being developed, with the location critical because of wetlands and other related factors.

Goslee explained that a topographical survey at the site showed that the southern part of the property is in the "velocity zone for a hurricane." That means the area would suffer direct impacts from wave action and tidal surges in a hurricane, he said.

"Therefore the building is being moved to higher ground to eliminate the risk of flooding destroying the building. The uphill location does have a small wetland area in it, but the risk is too great to build in the velocity zone," he wrote.

He said that once the location is pinpointed, the plans would go to the state Coastal Resources Management Council for approval. Meanwhile, the site plan review by the Planning Commission and spe-

cial-use permit review by the Zoning Board of Review are being scheduled.

Road paving

The councilors expressed concern that the municipal waterline work involving road paving will be postponed until next spring. The town has been postponing some road work until the water pipes are installed and Goslee originally thought it would be done this year.

He reported that plans and specifications have been completed for road work that includes replacement of 7,000 feet of substandard pipe with new 12-inch diameter pipe in the downtown area. He said plans are being reviewed by the state Department of Health and will go out to bid when that review is complete.

Goslee said he expected that some test pit work could be done this year, but it is not advisable to begin water projects with winter approaching. He praised Deputy Public Works Director Michael Gray for his completing the plans "at significant cost savings" instead of hiring a contractor to do the engineering work.

Councilman William Kelly asked for an estimate of the amount of savings, and he asked about the possibility of starting at least some of the work before it gets too cold.

Next month

Goslee reminded the councilors that he is planning to give a public presentation and overview of municipal water system improvements at the next water and sewer meeting, Oct. 17. Some residents, mainly water department customers, have been asking questions about various aspects of plans for the pipe work, water plant, and the new, second water tower on Howland Avenue.



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