

**TOWN OF TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT  
TOWN COUNCIL – TOLLAND WATER COMMISSION – TOLLAND WPCA  
JOINT WORKSHOP OF OCTOBER 18, 2011**

**Members Present:**

Town Council: Fred Daniels, Chair; MaryAnn Delaney Tuttle, Jack Flynn, Craig Nussbaum  
Water Commission: Gene Koss, Chair; Richard Symonds, Vice Chair; Glenn MacDonald, Tom Rallo, William Pakulis  
Water Pollution Control Authority: Todd Rolland, Chair; Jim Williams, Vice Chair; Matt Rood

**Others Present:**

Steve Werbner, Town Manager  
Jennifer Usher, PE, Town Engineer & Public Works Administrator  
Rob Miller, Health Director with Eastern Highlands Health District

1. Call to Order: Fred Daniels, Town Council Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30p.m. in the first floor Community Room.
2. State of the Tolland Water Commission (TWC)

Jennifer Usher distributed two packets of information about the Tolland Water Commission and the Water Pollution Control Authority. She provided an overview of the existing water system, explaining that there are two water companies in town, the Connecticut Water Company and the Tolland Water System. The Tolland Water System has two parts, the main system that encompasses the area south of I-84 and which is fed from two town-owned wells at River Park, and the Skungamaug System which encompasses areas in the northern part of town.

She described the Tolland Water System as having 15 miles of water mains, five pressure reducing valve pits and a storage tank on Summit Drive. There is an additional community water system at the Village at Crystal Springs and it is anticipated that they will assume full ownership of this system in about five years. The Tolland Water System is made up of 476 customers with another 51 customers at the Village at Crystal Springs.

Jennifer Usher said current projects for the Tolland Water Commission include a report that was sent a year ago to the Department of Public Health at their request that shows water supply system projections. She said the DPH had requested further information and this additional information was recently submitted. Jennifer Usher said the Water Commission is also trying to obtain a new Diversion Permit to feed the Skungamaug system. She said customers on that system pay a higher rate because their water is purchased from the Connecticut Water Company. She said the TWC is also working on manganese and iron issues in the water.

She said that CWC is a contracted operator and they go to the well house daily. She and the TWC and the CWC have worked on several issues together.

Richard Symonds provided some history of the water systems in Tolland. He said the two Tolland systems were established in the 1980s in response to a significant number of failing well systems.

The possibility of a third well exists for Tolland Water Commission customers and Fred Daniels asked if the town actually needs a third well. Richard Symonds said a third well is a possibility that is on the table. He said presently they are focusing on repairs to the existing well systems and they are negotiating various stipulations in the Diversion Permit. Gene Koss said the issue is not so much whether there is sufficient water available, but whether they have the legal authority to take it. He said environmental regulators are very cautious in this area. Jennifer Usher said they do not need a third well immediately, but it is in their planning horizon.

Craig Nussbaum clarified with Tolland Water Commission members that a third well has not been actually drilled and he asked what the cost would be to do so. Jennifer Usher explained that while the drilling would cost thousands, the consulting and permitting fees to do so are greater. Mary Ann Delaney Tuttle asked where they anticipated a third well might be drilled. Gene Koss said there is plenty of room in the existing well field but at this time it is premature to speculate. He said they would first want to do exploratory drilling. He added that once they get the Diversion Permit they are seeking, it is good for 15 years.

Craig Nussbaum asked if the TWC had given any thought to turning the water system over to CWC. Richard Symonds and Gene Koss both explained that the rates from CWC are significantly higher as their operation is a for-profit one and the Tolland Water Commission has a different goal. Glenn MacDonald said they have not evaluated that option but they could. William Pakulis noted that the CWC-Skungamaug interconnection will also act as a backup water supply in an emergency situation, and if need be, they can open the interconnection in front of the Middle School to get CWC water to feed the town. Jennifer Usher said they did so recently as a result of problems associated with Hurricane Irene and also in another instance a few weeks later. Gene Koss reiterated that it is costly for the town to use this backup.

William Pakulis said there have been a number of increases in rates that they have had to implement in order to maintain their infrastructure and there will likely be more to follow.

Craig Nussbaum asked how big the problem is with iron and manganese. Rob Miller said the State does have an action level but not a maximum contaminant level for manganese. Jennifer Usher said in the past year and a half since she began working for the Town, she has gotten a lot of calls from residents. She described a situation where one person in a neighborhood has a problem but their neighbors do not, and so there was an assumption that there might be a problem with the individual lateral that goes to this resident's home. She said they flushed out the lateral and it cleared up the problem briefly, but it returned a few weeks later. She said they plan next to dig up the tap to see if it is set at the wrong angle. She said they are not always sure why manganese is showing up in the water and it is a cause for concern, but something that will require further investigation. She added that filters installed at homes or at well houses can remove manganese from the water but it is not an inexpensive operation. She said her office has been gathering information from residents with complaints in order to get a better handle on what might be the causes.

Fred Daniels asked if there are circumstances where the State can step in and require the Town to supply water to a resident. Gene Koss said this can occur. He noted that the DPH has strongly nudged Tolland to sell their water in Willington. Glenn MacDonald said wells contaminated by the town dump resulted in the establishment of the Skungamaug system. Additionally leaking tanks from a gas station caused well contamination at the Fire Training Center.

### 3. State of the Tolland Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA)

Jennifer Usher noted that the WPCA is a younger commission than the Tolland Water Commission and many of the WPCA's problems mimic those that the TWC has experienced earlier. She said the WPCA used to meet once a month. Now they meet two times with their second meeting a workshop where they have focused on single issues such as putting together the FOG (fats, oils and grease) regulation, reviewing benefit assessments, and finalizing the Facilities Plan to name a few.

She said the WPCA's first charge is to protect the waters of the town and state so they are much more than a Sewer Commission. They presently have 11 miles of sewer mains, some that are gravity flow and others that are high pressure and low pressure mains. There are also four pump stations. The sewage is all pumped to the Vernon plant.

Todd Rolland noted that they have a lot of infrastructure, but only 75 customers and that creates a huge financial hurdle.

Jennifer Usher said in the WPCA's Operating and Maintenance budget for this year, they did not increase rates to customers. Members of the WPCA worked very hard to try to hold down costs, but there is not much money that they can put away for addressing deteriorating mains. Todd Rolland added that their base rate is Vernon's rate and then they build on that to add their costs to operate the system in Tolland. Jennifer Usher said the Town of Vernon looks at Tolland as basically one single big customer.

Jennifer Usher said they did not have much of a budget for a maintenance plan until about a year ago when they started reviewing their needs. She said they replaced the pumps at the high school a year ago. In talking about the pump station at the high school, Jim Williams said the pump station installed there was part of the high school building budget and at some point, a decision had been made to go with equipment the WPCA feels was inferior. Jim Williams also said in the past year a lock was flushed down the system which ended up destroying a \$30,000 grinder pump. He added that one thing that is hurting their system is that there are no mandatory hookups required and so they are not getting enough flow to keep the sewer lines clean. As a result, this leads to buildup of excessive grease. He said Jennifer, their consultant, and WPCA members have been inspecting grease traps quarterly to help to ensure that business owners are having those traps pumped out regularly.

Jim Williams said the WPCA is faced with some very stressful future projects in order to lift a consent order put in place by the Department of Environmental Protection (now the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection). He said the DEEP wants to see constructed solutions that are very expensive and which he expects would be very hard to pass in referendum because they will benefit so few residents in town. He said the question for them is—what happens if they can't pass this? He said their 75 customers cannot support

the constructed solutions and the DEEP is calling for unfunded mandates that a community of their size cannot afford.

Jim Williams said as part of their Wastewater Facilities Plan, the WPCA tried to establish a plan for testing criteria on areas of concern in town. Todd Rolland said they also added a recommendation for a town-wide pump-out ordinance. However, he said the DEEP responded by saying this was insufficient and they want to see constructed solutions in Tolland's Wastewater Facilities Plan. Todd Rolland said the constructed solutions for the Tier IV areas can cost in the area of about \$12 million each. Since their last conversation with DEEP, Todd Rolland said they have been working with the Health District to gather information on properties in the areas of concern and are hoping to meet again with the DEEP in early November.

Jim Williams noted that there is a proposal for development on the Gottier property and the WPCA is looking at the possibility of asking the developer to install a pump station on Anthony Road to handle their flow that could also be used to address areas of concern in the Anthony Road neighborhood. He said they are hoping it will demonstrate to the DEEP that they are making a good faith effort to address potential polluting of waters in town.

Mary Ann Delaney Tuttle asked if the Gottier plan, based on the topography of the area, could construct a gravity flow system. Jim Williams said the developer has proposed a gravity flow system. Jennifer Usher said the WPCA was entertaining the idea to require Gottier to construct a pump station/force main system in lieu of the gravity system, thereby providing the means for a connection to the Anthony Road area, an area of concern per the Wastewater Facilities Plan. Mary Ann Delaney Tuttle asked if the PZC could make the pump station a condition of approval for the development as it would also add substantially to the WPCAs flows and customer base. Jennifer Usher said that might be a possibility.

Fred Daniels noted that the philosophy in the past was to limit residential sewerage in order to prevent higher density development and to keep Tolland a rural community.

Jennifer Usher said that right now their regulations state that if a septic system repair or replacement is needed, and it cannot be done to code, and if sewers are available, the property owner must hook into the sewer. However, there is no mandate that they do so if they can make a code-compliant repair. Rob Miller said the EHHD does make some exceptions and they have never been in the position to having to condemn a home. He said the WPCA could modify their regulations to mandate sewer connections.

Steve Werbner said the concerns coming out of the DEEP are that there have been too many exceptions made and that creates the potential for water pollution. Todd Rolland noted that they have found no evidence that any waters in Tolland are being polluted. Jim Williams said the DEEP is calling for action now because they feel that waiting for pollution to be discovered may mean that it is too late to properly address the pollution problem.

Rob Miller said their office has compiled information on Willie Circle properties (another area of concern outlined in the Wastewater Facilities Plan) that show the properties can support code-compliant septic systems. He said many of the repairs and replacements made in this neighborhood are code compliant and if they are properly installed and maintained, there is no reason to believe they won't last indefinitely. Jim Williams said that they told the

DEEP they wanted to take the time to collect data to determine these things, but DEEP quickly rejected that notion. Rob Miller noted that the DEEP uses different, more conservative standards than DPH in regards to pollution by septic systems.

Jim Williams noted that the system at the high school was designed to handle 40,000 gallons per day and they are currently only discharging 3,500 gpd, a good example where actual flows can be different than design flows.

Jennifer Usher said in the last 18 months, the WPCA has done extensive work on the Wastewater Facilities Plan in an effort to lift the 35-year-old Consent Order. She said the DEEP rejected their plan indicating that sewers or community systems were the only solutions that would be accepted for the areas of high concern. The WPCA's plan now is to go back to the DEEP with substantial data showing repairs and variances made in areas of concern that prove to be minor.

Steve Werbner said that if there are, for example, only two homes in a particular area that require a constructed solution due to the inability to meet code compliance, it may be less expensive for the town to buy those properties from their owners rather than to construct \$12 million solutions. He noted that Tolland is called on to meet the same requirements of such systems as the Metropolitan District Commission which has a huge customer base.

Referring back to the discussion about the high school pump station, Mary Ann Delaney Tuttle asked if there was any discussion about upgrading the equipment as part of a school project that could be reimbursed at 55 percent. Todd Rolland noted that they did end up replacing the pumps there with different equipment, and if this had been a possibility, they had most likely missed this opportunity. Steve Werbner said he would think it would be unlikely for the state to fund a replacement for something that should have lasted 20 years.

Fred Daniels asked who the operators are for the TWC and WPCA. Jennifer Usher said The Water Planet is our operator for the WPCA. She said CWC operates the TWC systems, adding that they have to pay the operator for visits to the wellhouses and storage tank, so she and TWC members have been trying to pitch in to do work to save money. She said Gene Koss and Richard Symonds spent hours working on a response to the DPH, saving thousands on consultant fees—the same for their work on the Diversion Permit. She said the WPCA does grease trap inspections with her and the operator and that they try to minimize how much they use another consultant, Fuss & O'Neill.

4. Discussion of TWC & WPCA Objectives and On-Going Staffing Needs. Steve Werbner said both the TWC and WPCA came to him about a year ago asking for a minimum 30-hour a week person that the two commissions could share to help with the demands on the two commissions and alleviate the burden that has been placed on the Town Engineer. He said they both complimented Jennifer Usher's dedication to their commissions but acknowledge they need additional help. The position was approved as a contractual one, but unfortunately because of the insurance requirements, the town did not get any interest in the position. Meanwhile the problems remain and are worsening as the responsibilities on the Commissions are taking their toll on volunteers. He said they have to do something.

Noting that elections are coming up in early November, he said the Commissions will need to talk to the new Town Council. Fred Daniels asked what the new hire would be asked to do.

Jennifer Usher said they were originally looking for a person for a minimum of 24 hours. She said the work this person could do would free her up to concentrate on stormwater and other engineering issues. She said she would expect the new hire to do inspections, compile data, create maps and assist with the on-going operational and administrative needs of both commissions.

Jim Williams provided an example of what the new hire could do. He said the creation of record drawings for a town project slipped the contract process and while it is a simple drafting task that might take about 30 hours of work, the consultant has provided them with a quote to do the work for \$3,000. This example alone is 10 percent of the salary they would expect to pay for the new hire who could take on this task in just over a week.

5. Discussion of Future Actions including External Review of Long Term Needs of the TWC and WPCA and Alternative Management Structures. Glenn MacDonald said they cannot work on strategic planning for their commission when they are spending all their time plugging holes. He said they are reaching a saturation point just keeping the system going. Fred Daniels asked if they need to bring in a consultant for strategic planning for the two commissions. Glenn MacDonald said they have been in contact with a firm that does this type of work and have budgeted funds for these services into their 12-month plan.

Fred Daniels said these two commissions aren't normally high on the public's consciousness but are critical and the hiring of new staff and addressing of long-term planning will need to be a high priority with the new Council.

Jack Flynn asked Steve Werbner if he felt the town should increase subsidization of the two commissions. Steve Werbner said he would want to see what value they could first get out of a new hire but this is something they would also have to consider. He said they need to consider that the work the commissions do benefit the whole town and not just their individual customers. Craig Nussbaum said it is clear that contracting out the new hire position is not a viable option.

Steve Werbner asked both Commissions to discuss among themselves if their original recommendations for additional staff should remain the same or if they would recommend any changes. He said he will pass the information onto the new Town Council in November.

Jennifer Usher said she was grateful to all of the volunteers for their hard work they are doing, and appreciates all their efforts.

6. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:10p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Gentile  
WPCA Clerk