



City of Portsmouth

Sagamore Avenue Sewer Extension Project FAQs

April 27, 2022 Public Information Meeting

CONSTRUCTION QUESTIONS

How many properties both north and south of Sagamore Creek form the basis of the project for the current design and implementation of the proposed low-pressure sewer system?

There are 88 properties with 91 connections included in the design: 64 connections on the north side of Sagamore Creek and 27 on the south side.

Is future development being addressed in the sizing of the system, ((i.e. six condos at Golden Egg, six at Luster King, a new house on Walker Bungalow and potential development on Wentworth Road)?

The design is based on the 91 connections. Any additional connections will need to be evaluated at the time of the proposed development to ensure there is adequate capacity. Developments are evaluated by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Planning Board prior to approval. As part of the TAC process, the developer must show what the intended water and sewer usage will be and a Licensed Professional Engineer must demonstrate that the existing utilities will be able to service the property. If the existing utilities are not deemed sufficient, it is the responsibility of the developer to upgrade the utilities. The design team was aware of the Golden Egg development and the new house on Walker Bungalow.

What is the minimum and the maximum number of hook-ups needed for the low-pressure sewer system to function without periodic sewer main power flushing? Is it as effective with five properties as well as 125? With two people per hook-up as well as six per hook-up?

The system will function properly with only a few connections without power flushing. The greatest concern would be odors at the point of discharge to the gravity sewer. This will be addressed if needed.

What is the trigger for the City to power flush the mains if the flow is not sufficient to move the waste to the gravity line?

The City does not anticipate the need to power flush the mains regardless of the number of connections.

What steps are being taken for radon detection and mitigation? Will the City test all houses before and after blasting, to assure there is no increased radon?

The contractor is responsible for radon testing before and after blasting for any homeowner who wishes to have the testing done. The Contractor will be in touch regarding the testing prior to any blasting.

Does the City have a plan to address the polluters along Lafayette Road, or the run-off further inland along Banfield Road, or the city dump?

Sagamore Creek is a large watershed that receives stormwater runoff from many different areas. The water quality is tracked by the Department of Environmental Services and is impaired for certain water quality parameters. The City is working to identify the sources and potential solutions as required through its stormwater permit with EPA and the adaptive management plan portion of the Great Bay Total Nitrogen General Permit. The Jones Avenue landfill, which is capped, has monitoring wells that are sampled routinely as required by the EPA. The City has improved treatment of a significant stormwater discharge upstream of tidal Sagamore Creek through a gravel wetland and bio-retention system behind the Department of Public Works.

What is the plan for notifying homeowners in the vicinity of this project about construction, blasting inspecting all houses, outbuildings, underground tanks and yards, documenting existing conditions with photos and video? How is the City notifying residents about this project?

City staff use the following means for communication:

- USPS mail notices to affected homeowners (contact information from City tax records)
- Dedicated page on the City website: <https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/publicworks/sagamore-ave-sewer-extension-project>
- Dedicated e-mail list, maintained in MailChimp – sign up on the project webpage to receive notices: Emails collected from sign-in sheets at each public meeting are added to this contact list.
- Public meeting notices on the City website Calendar, also posted in social media, Channel 22 and via press releases. (All public meetings are recorded and posted to the City website for later viewing.)
- Electronic message boards
- Notifications in the City Newsletter (published Mondays and Wednesdays. Sign up: <https://www.cityofportsmouth.com/city/welcome-portsmouths-community-newsletter>)

How is the water main in the street being protected from the blasting?

Contractor and subcontractors will plan based on blasting needs for rock removal and design the blasting plan to prevent damage to water mains. If damaged, contractor to repair and readjust approach.

Who is writing the Memorandum of Understanding between the City and project participants?

The City's Legal Department is writing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Residents will be provided a copy for review. City is hopeful to have a standard template for efficiency purposes.

Which way does the sewerage flow north of the Creek, and south of the Creek? Where and how does the system enter the gravity system? Does it require a lift station? Where is that located?

The new sewer extension north of the creek will discharge into the gravity sewer system at the intersection of the Tidewatch Condominiums and Sagamore Ave. From there it enters the existing sewer collection system where it ultimately ends up at the Peirce Island Waste Water Treatment Facility.

The sewer system south of the Creek will discharge to the gravity sewer located in the street approximately near 1169 Sagamore Ave. From there it enters the existing sewer collection system where it ultimately ends up at the Peirce Island Waste Water Treatment Facility.

Has the private side work been put out for bid and approved including: the grinder pump/tanks, electrical and interior plumbing changes, and decommissioning of septic systems?

The private side work was included as an Add Alternate, or Add Alt. in the contract. That means as funding allows, the private side work will be awarded. Funding for the private side work has been planned for in the City's budget through 2028 to cover the properties who wish to connect and asked for designs at the time of the bid. Pricing may fluctuate over time as the City will be unable to keep the current bid prices through the entirety of this funding

Under EF-22-SD90, \$300,000 is allocated for connections. Are these connections planned for installation in 2022 when the public sewer main goes in or not until 2023?

The timing associated with installing new private side connections will depend on the contractors' schedule to complete the pipelines in the street and confirmation of the residents to connect to the sewer by completion of the memorandum of understanding. It is anticipated that some private side work will overlap work to install the sewer main.

Why are "holding tanks" the first priority over failed systems if the objective is to clean up the Creek?

There are only three properties on holding tanks in the entire project area. The properties on holding tanks must be connected to the sewer main per NHDES requirements.

Why is the main wastewater line going to BG's Boathouse and the marina area?

The Consent Decree with NHDES and the EPA requires the City of Portsmouth to extend sewer service to all properties in Portsmouth along this area of Sagamore Creek.

What guarantees are there that the marina won't be developed into dense housing? Would the City consider buying that property to assure it stays undeveloped?

The property is privately-owned. The City has no plans to purchase it. If the property owner decides to develop the property, they would be subject to City zoning requirements and the Planning Board review process.

Are there plans to widen Sagamore Ave to better accommodate bicyclists?

No.

Are there plans to rebuild the sidewalks along Sagamore Avenue?

One of the Add Alternates includes replacement of the sidewalk on Sagamore Ave North of the creek.

If the property connecting is a condo, will each resident in the condo be responsible for the full cost of installation, or will the cost be split between all the residents?

If there is one connection to the condo then the cost for the one connection would be subject to whatever the condominium documents dictate for shared expenses. If there is one connection per unit then each unit would be responsible for their individual service costs, dependent on condominium documents.

Does a clog in the system shut it down? How will a resident know if the system is clogging up? Could it flow back out of the top of the tank into the yard?

The E-One pump is a grinder pump. This means that it is very unlikely that any of the waste that gets into the sewer main will be large enough to clog the main. If there is a clog in the system in the house, the pump would detect high pressure and sound an alarm. This would alert you that you should stop using water and call the City. If you stop using water when the alarm is sounding, there would be no backup, as the holding tank would not fill and overflow.

In the event of a power failure, most high-demand water service in the home – appliances, etc. – shut down so there is less impact. The grinder pump alarm has a battery backup and can be connected to a home generator, if desired.

Where are back flow preventers in the system?

There is a check valve located at the property line to prevent any waste from the sewer main from backing up into the pump. There is an internal check valve in the pump to prevent backups as well.

PRIVATE PROPERTY/HOMEOWNER QUESTIONS

Will homes not in need of initial hook-up receive the same terms in the future when they either need or want to hook up?

As shown in the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) funding is planned to continue to Fiscal Year 2028. Properties that wish to connect prior to the end of fiscal year 2028 will need to notify the City prior to December of 2026. The cost sharing option is available to the property owner only when all work is completed by the City and its contractors.

Is there a plan to develop a cost estimate for additional property owners for the private side work?

Yes. Every homeowner wishing to connect can schedule a site visit and receive a cost quote to participate in the project. The City will be completing more site visits to establish individual cost estimates. Contact Zachary Cronin at 603-610-7304 or by email at zmcronin@cityofportsmouth.com to set up a site meeting.

What cost will the homeowner have to cover?

Each homeowner who connects to the sewer extension pays for the lateral pipe that connects the City sewer pipe to the grinder pump and its installation. Each homeowner will receive an individualized estimated cost based on the contractor's unit pump price and the cost to connect (subject to actual conditions at the property during installation).

Will the homeowner have to connect to the sewer if the house is sold?

No (per NHDES)

Will this devalue my house?

Sewer service connection is generally considered to add value, not detract.

If a homeowner does not connect now, what will the cost to the homeowner be in the future?

Anyone connecting to the sewer system now receives the cost-sharing price. Additional connections may be able to participate in Project cost-sharing if they sign on by December 2026 (to be included in FY28 CIP). Once the Project is completed, property owners can connect to the sewer at their own cost.

What happens if blasting causes damage to my property?

The City recommends taking part in the contractor's pre-blast survey. If damage is suspected after blasting, the property owner should immediately contact the onsite Resident Project Representative Roy Babylon from Wright-Peirce (cell: 207.332.1527). Documentation of property post-blast will be compared to the pre-blast survey. If damage is confirmed, the contractors' insurance will cover the damages.

Will blasting be delayed off until all properties have completed pre-blast surveys?

Blasting will not begin until after all interested homeowners have the opportunity to schedule a pre-blast inspection survey, but the preferred deadline is April 29, 2022. Homeowners can still schedule inspection surveys by calling Chris Scott at Maine Drilling & Blasting, 603.232.8538.

If a lot is undeveloped and there are no plans to develop, does it need sewer?

No.

Will there be a second round of house surveys for residents that now wish to connect into the sewer?

Yes.

Will residents sign a contract to have the work done?

The City is developing a Memorandum of Agreement and other documents such as a payment schedule for the zero-interest loan (as needed – full payment in advance is an option) for those participating in the project, to allow for work to proceed.