

Town of Chincoteague, Inc.



The Town of Chincoteague has been working and studying sewage disposal for many years and we continue to do so. I would like to review the most recent Chronology of events related to this Issue.

- October 2011 – The Council formed a Wastewater Advisory Committee whose five members were local business owners and engineers for the purpose of determining the wastewater needs for the Town and to make recommendations to the Council for wastewater collection and disposal alternatives.
- June 2013 - The Wastewater Advisory Committee issued its final report and concluded that the entire island should not, at this time, transition from individual septic drainfields and private treatment systems to a single public wastewater utility system stating -

“It is clear that a voluntary connection agreement will be needed that would allow the cost burden to be carried by the commercial and public customers serving the tourism industry. These issues mean that there will likely be more than one type of treatment facility used to manage the needs of Chincoteague Island.”

The committee identified the Town’s concentrated commercial areas of Main Street and Maddox Blvd as being the primary targets of initial treatment efforts.

- October 2020 – The Circuit Court approves an extension of Hampton Roads Sanitation District’s service area to include all of Accomack County.
- November 2020 - The Town was approached by Todd Burbage of Bluewater Development Corp. concerning the possible acquisition of the sewage treatment facility at Sunset Bay Condominiums.
- November 2020 - The Town manager and an independent engineering consultant began an evaluation of the plant and associated facilities.

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- November 2020 - Council was presented with the possibility of the plant's acquisition at its workshop meeting. The presentation was held in executive session to protect the Town's position due to the competitive nature of the offer with other private entities.
- December 2020 – at its monthly meeting, Council was presented with a preliminary report of the plant's condition but due to the imposed time constraints, could not complete a proper evaluation of the facility and likewise could not determine the plant's overall viability. Council passed on the opportunity to acquire the facility at that time.
- February 2021 – The Town Manager Contacted Mr. Burbage to determine the level of interest of the transfer moving forward.
- April 2021 – Council was informed of Mr. Burbage's continued interest in the transfer of the facility to the Town at a reasonable cost.
- July 2021 – The Council conducted a public hearing to determine the public's priorities for the expenditure of \$2.98M of ARPA funding. Seventy-five percent of speakers listed public sewage treatment and disposal as a priority.
- July 2021 – The Town contacted Hampton Roads Sanitation District to propose HRSD's assumption of ownership and subsequent operation of the Sunset Bay Facility. HRSD offered to provide a consultant to evaluate the plant and the proposed transfer and also to commission a broader study to identify a more permanent solution for the sewage disposal needs of Northern Accomack County.
- August 2021 – HRSD experts performed several onsite inspections of the Sunset Bay Plant and associated facilities.
- October 2021 – HRSD consultant submitted a report and recommendation for the Sunset Bay facility which was reviewed in executive session at the October Workshop Council meeting.
- October 2021 – The Town negotiated with Mr. Burbage the transfer of the plant, land and associated facilities to the Town of Chincoteague at no cost.
- October 2021 – HRSD agreed in principle to accept the facility and permits from the Town, to operate the plant moving forward with the existing customers and to develop additional capacity to utilize the unused permits. The Town agreed to fund construction of the collection system as well as control approval for connections to the system.

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- November 2021 – The Town agreed in principle to fund necessary one-time upgrades to the facility and transfer the plant to HRSD for all future operation, maintenance and expansion.
- December 2021 – The Town’s ARPA committee proposed the utilization of ARPA funds for the necessary upgrades to the Sunset Bay Facility and design and construction of a collection system for a planned Island service area.
- December 2021 – Bluewater Development agreed in principle to transfer the plant and associated facilities directly to HRSD to simplify and expedite the transfer process.

Summary

The decision to pursue a limited-service area with an existing DEQ permitted facility and additional permits for expansion allows the Town to offer through HRSD a partial solution to sewage collection, treatment and disposal for commercial and public customers that do not have other viable options. This decision directly correlates with the stated priorities expressed by the public at the ARPA funding hearing. The use of ARPA funds to construct a collection system while pursuing other available State and Federal funding opportunities will help keep the costs of such solutions primarily within the private sector, without placing undue burden on local taxpayers.