

Presented 3/20/13
LPA meeting

LAKE PARKER SEWER PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

Background

Sewer lines were first installed in Glover in 1982. Glover Village was connected to the sewer plant in Barton and a community leach field was built for West Glover Village. Funding was through an EPA grant and a FHA loan and the loan portion was paid off by the sewer users. Total annual payments were \$4,870 and the final payment was made in 2002.

In 2009, after many years of problems with the W. Glover system and in order to comply with state mandates, the sewer line was extended from Glover Village to W. Glover. Funding was through a USDA Grant/Loan and payments are \$41,104 per year for 30 years. Glover voters approved the loan and the selectboard, guided by the opinions expressed at the public meeting before the vote, made the decision that the loan payment would be split 50/50 between sewer users and all town property tax payers. This adds about \$14 per \$100,000 of assessed value to all Glover property tax bills.

The extension of the sewer line to W. Glover was planned as the first step in a larger project and the capacity was built in to handle sewage from the homes and camps around Lake Parker. This decision was made for 3 reasons: 1) most, if not all, septic systems around the lake are built in soils that have low ratings for on-site sewage treatment and, 2) the proximity of the W. Glover sewer line offers the best available means of eliminating on-site sewage treatment around the lake and, 3) interest in hooking on to the sewer system was expressed by a number of lakeshore property owners.

Current Proposal

In October of 2012 the selectboard agreed to apply for a planning loan and asked Leach Engineering to provide the town with updated cost estimates and other information that could be presented to Lake Parker property owners and town voters so that a decision could be made on the extension of the sewer to the lake.

The proposed system would make use of individual grinder pumps located in polyethylene tanks buried outside each home or camp. These would be connected by small diameter piping to larger diameter sewer lines buried along the road right of way. The plan is to lay as much of the pipe as possible by horizontal boring, but some excavation would be necessary at each building and along the roads.

The best possible financing at this time would be a 45% grant and 55% loan from USDA Rural Development. The total estimated project cost is \$2,730,000. The grant would be \$1,228,500. The loan of \$1,501,500 at 2.5% for 30 years would require an annual debt payment of \$71,800. Assuming a total of 110 new connections around Lake Parker, the projected per user annual cost for debt would be \$653 for 30 years if new users pay all costs of the project. Estimated annual operating and maintenance costs are \$130 per user for a total of \$783. Sources at USDA have told Leach Engineering that this may be the last year of the grant program.

The Decision Making Process

Making the decision on whether to proceed with this project is complicated by a number of issues. Glover voters must approve the loan of \$1,501,500 by Australian ballot. Lake Parker property owners are the main beneficiaries of the project but only a minority of them are Glover voters, and lake property owners may pay all or most of the project costs.

The Town is not trying to force this project on lake property owners and Glover voters have no incentive to approve a loan for a project that is not supported by a significant majority of lake property owners. But, because the decision on whether debt payment will be shared by all town taxpayers will not be made until after the public meeting and the vote on the loan approval, lake property owners are being asked to support a project without knowing the exact financial implications.

The steps in this process are governed by USDA Grant/Loan program rules and by VT state law. The Town of Glover must abide by the rules and the law. The situation is unusual because the main beneficiaries/contributors are not also voters registered in Glover. Successful negotiation of the process will require understanding and cooperation on the part of all concerned.

Is the project necessary?

Over the years as more camps have been built around Lake Parker, and as camps have been enlarged, and as camps have been converted to year-round homes, on-site sewage disposal has become more of a threat to lake water quality. On-site sewage treatment depends on the microorganisms in soil above the water table to render bacteria and other pathogens harmless. In lakeshore soils with high water tables, and especially in wet years like this summer, effluent can be travelling directly through saturated soils from leach fields to the lake.

Many of the septic systems around the lake are on small parcels of land and were built before regulations were in force. Some of these systems are failing and some have already failed. In a wet year most of them may be failing. With increasing concern at the state level about VT lake water quality, regulation of septic systems will certainly become more strict in the future. All septic systems fail at some point. It is difficult to predict replacement costs, but engineered systems near lakeshores are expensive now and will become more expensive.

In making the decision whether or not to support the sewer extension, Lake Parker property owners might want to look to the future as much as possible. Is this the best way to protect lake water quality, lakeshore property values, and the health of family, friends, and renters who enjoy recreation in and around Lake Parker?

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Glover Selectboard