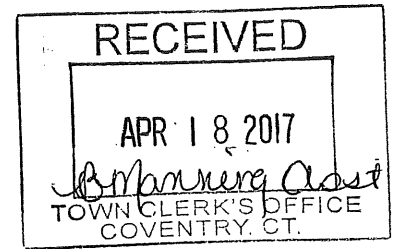


**Coventry Water Pollution Control Authority**  
**Public Hearing Minutes**  
**April 13, 2017**



**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Matthew Twerdy, Richard Brand, Lyndon Wilmot, Susan Jamaitus

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Mark Kiefer, Director of Public Works  
Mike Ruef, WWTP Operator  
Members of the Press  
Interested Residents

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Daniel Murphy

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Matthew Twerdy called the April 13, 2017 WPCA Public Hearing to order at 6:00 P.M. in the Coventry Public Works Facility, 100 Olsen Farm Rd. Coventry, CT.
2. **LEGAL NOTICE:** Matthew Twerdy read the following legal notice which was published in the Willimantic Chronicle on March 31, 2017:

Notice is hereby given that the Water Pollution Control Authority of the Town of Coventry will hold a Public Hearing on Thursday, April 13, 2017 at 6:00 P.M. in the Coventry Public Works Facility Conference Room, 100 Olsen Farm Road Coventry, Connecticut. The purpose of the Public Hearing will be to give all sewer users an opportunity to be heard concerning a proposed \$25 increase in the annual sewer use base rate raising it from \$350 per Equivalent Dwelling Unit (EDU) to \$375 per EDU. The proposed fee increase will be posted in the Coventry Town Clerk's Office no later than March 31, 2017.

**3. PROPOSED INCREASE TO ANNUAL SEWER USE FEE:**

- Mr. Malcome Gill asked how many users are on the sewer system and how much revenue would this proposed increase generate? There are 916 properties connected to the sewer system and some of those have multiple residential units or commercial uses so we currently bill out 1175 Equivalent Dwelling Units (EDUs). The rate increase will generate approximately \$29,000. Mr. Gill asked if most people pay on time and if late payments effect use rates? About 95% of our users pay on time and late fees from owners who didn't pay on time last year make up for those who don't pay on time this year. The Revenue Collector handles billing so we are not sure how many properties they need to put liens on but we do not believe this is common. Mr. Gill inquired how the sewer system was running? The system is running well. We are frequently upgrading and replacing aging equipment at the Treatment Plant and continually inspecting, cleaning, and repairing the collection system.

- Mr. Morgan Utzig inquired why sewer use rates are the same for a house with 2 people living in it vs a house with 8 people in it. We get this question often. Most cities bill for sewer use based on water meter usage readings. Since most of our sewer users have well water there is no meter to take readings from so we can't use water usage for our billing.

The number of people living in a house at a given time could change and there is no way for Town staff to monitor and verify this. Mrs. Utzig asked if fees would continue to increase over upcoming years? This year the WPCA is contributing \$25K towards debt service and will increase its contribution by \$10K per year for the next 3 years up to a maximum of \$55K per year. We also have increasing operating expenses so future rate increases are likely. The Town is also contributing towards debt service because the sewer system benefits the entire Town.

- General discussion: Sewers were installed to correct a community health concern by cleaning polluted groundwater in the sewer area. Other ancillary benefits have been increasing property values around the Lake and allowing development of 2 housing projects, all of which increase our tax base. Also the High School, Middle School, Robertson School, Town Hall, BOE Administration Building, CVFD, Police Department, and Orchard Hills are all tied in to the system. Some of these facilities would not be possible without sewers and septic repairs to the existing buildings could be extremely costly. Coventry is below the State average for sewer use fees.

- Roberta Wilmot read written testimony submitted by Christine Pattee in support of the fee increase. Ms. Pattee referenced statistics from The Partnership for Strong Communities showing that Coventry's real property had increased 16% between 2008 and 2013, and speculated that the sewer project had a big part in the increase. Her full testimony is attached to the end of these minutes.

4. **ADJOURNMENT:** The April 13, 2017 WPCA Public Hearing was adjourned at 6:20 PM.

**Coventry Water Pollution Control Authority**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**April 13, 2017**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Matthew Twerdy, Richard Brand, Lyndon Wilmot, Susan Jamaitus

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Mark Kiefer, Director of Public Works  
Mike Ruef, WWTP Operator  
Members of the Press

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Daniel Murphy

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Matthew Twerdy called the April 13, 2017 WPCA Regular Meeting to order at 6:21 P.M. in the Coventry Public Works Facility, 100 Olsen Farm Rd. Coventry, CT.

2. **AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS:**

None

**3. NEW BUSINESS:**

**MOTION 4-13-2017-1: To add item 3.b to the meeting agenda "Discussion and Possible Action on Proposed Sewer Use Rate Increase"**

By: Wilmot                      Seconded: Brand

**The Motion carried with the following vote:**

For: Brand, Twerdy, Jamaitus, Wilmot

Against: None

Abstain: None

- a. The Minutes from the March 9, 2017 WPCA Regular Meeting were reviewed.

**MOTION 4-13-2017-2: To approve March 9, 2017 WPCA Regular Meeting Minutes.**

By: Wilmot                      Seconded: Jamaitus

**The Motion carried with the following vote:**

For: Brand, Twerdy, Jamaitus, Wilmot

Against: None

Abstain: None

- b. Discussion and Possible Action on Proposed Sewer Use Rate Increase.
  - The proposed sewer use rate increase was discussed.

**MOTION 4-13-2017-3: To increase the sewer use base rate by \$25 per EDU raising it from \$350 per EDU to \$375 effective July 1, 2017.**

By: Brand                      Seconded: Wilmot

**The Motion carried with the following vote:**

For: Brand, Twerdy, Jamaitus, Wilmot

Against: None

Abstain: None

**4. OLD BUSINESS:**

- a. The Western Route 44 Sewer Planning Area was discussed. Mark Kiefer met with the Town Finance Committee to discuss funding for the hydraulic study. We estimate the study will cost \$42,000 and the Finance Committee has agreed to split the cost and contribute a maximum of \$21,000. We are awaiting a second cost opinion.

- b. Revisions to the WPCA Regulations, Ordinance, and Water Pollution Control Plan were discussed. Members and staff will continue to review.
- c. Sewer system capacity was discussed. Staff have been inspecting manholes in the older sections of the sewer system and have scheduled repairs to a source of clean water infiltration. Flows are down slightly from this time last year. We hope to have a better gauge of capacity by the end of May.
- d. Development potential at 44 Lake St. was discussed. No new info/action on this item.

**5. WPCA STAFF REPORT:**

- a. Mike Ruef presented the Treatment Plant Operator Report for February 2017.
- b. Mike Ruef presented the Collection System Report for February 2017.

**6. CORRESPONDENCE/COMMUNICATION:**

- a. The revised Developer's Agreement for Sanitary Sewer at Kenyon Falls, 28 Armstrong Road, was recorded in the Land Records.

**7. ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOTION 4-13-2017-4: To adjourn the April 13, 2017 WPCA Regular Meeting at 7:05 P.M.**

By: Wilmot Second: Brand

**The Motion carried with the following vote:**

For: Twerdy, Brand, Wilmot, Jamaitus

Against: None

Abstain: None

Respectfully submitted,



Mike Ruef, WWTP Operator

*\*These minutes are not official until approved by the WPCA at the next regular WPCA meeting.*

**Water Pollution Control Authority meeting, 4/13/2017  
Public Hearing on proposed sewer use fee increase**

Testimony of Christine Pattee, 98 Brookline Rd. Coventry CT  
[C2pattee@aol.com](mailto:C2pattee@aol.com), 860-742-6511

I'm speaking in favor of the proposed sewer use fee increase. Access to public sewer increases the value of individual homes far beyond the modest amount of existing or proposed use fees. In fact, I think I've found statistics showing that the installation of public sewers in Coventry has substantially increased the Real Property Grand List for the whole town. According to Coventry's 2015 Housing Data Profile prepared by the Partnership for Strong Communities (original source CT Office of Policy and Management), our total real property increased by 16%, from \$768,674,610 in 2008 to \$891,719,220 in 2013. In comparison, out of 169 CT towns, 152 "municipalities have seen either no change in real property grand lists, or declines, forcing most to raise mil rates, reduce services or both."

Without further consultation with town finance staff, we can't know for sure what caused this dramatic increase, but my speculation is that it's due to two factors: construction in the pipeline before the 2008 market crash and upward expansion of small footprint lakeside cottages now that the number of bedrooms is no longer constrained by a failing septic system.

I came across this fascinating statistic in the course of discussions we're having at the Senior Center, Housing Options for Coventry Seniors and Millennials. Many of us seniors would like to move out of our current homes into smaller units with less maintenance and closer neighbors, at a mid-level price, i.e. between subsidized housing and upscale retirement community. We've come to realize that for housing to be affordable to middle income buyers, it needs to be connected to an existing sewage disposal system as well as public water.

Reading recent WPCA meeting minutes, I've come to appreciate how close our sewer system is to the capacity that could trigger a state-required upgrade. I've also come to appreciate how hard this agency and its staff are working plug the leaks and keep the whole system up to snuff. I support the proposed sewer use fee increase because resolution of Coventry's sewer capacity problem is vitally important to the availability of affordable housing for both seniors and millennials living in this town.