



Takoma Park Frequently Asked Questions – February 18, 2016

Q1: Which homeowners have previously been involved in an alignment vote?

A: In April 2015, homeowners at addresses 6601 through 6713 Eastern Avenue were given the opportunity to vote for either a backyard or front yard alignment solution. Other homeowners in the 6700 block of Eastern Avenue were only presented the front yard grinder pump alignment, and they were not able to participate in a vote.

Q2: Does the backyard alignment solution shown in the February website update suggest that all homeowners have agreed to the backyard alignment?

A: The backyard alignment shown in the February 2016 website update is a new alignment that the design team developed to allow all homeowners the opportunity to vote for an alignment solution. Both the front yard and backyard alignments are feasible solutions and WSSC is equally ready to move forward with either alignment. We are seeking the final votes of the remaining homeowners to solidify the final design plans.

Q3: Why won't WSSC own the grinder pumps?

A: Unlike most utilities, WSSC is a bi-county, public agency of the State of Maryland. It derives its authority through the Maryland Annotated Code, Public Utility Article. The law explains that expenditure of public funds by WSSC for private purposes is not permitted unless authorized explicitly or implicitly by legislative enactment. The statutes that govern WSSC in the Public Utility Article do not authorize WSSC to own or maintain pipes or facilities on private property. WSSC does not have the authority to maintain a service connection or a grinder pump on private property. WSSC's obligation is to provide water and sewer service from the main up to the private property line. It is the homeowner's obligation to install, maintain and operate its pipes on private property. WSSC, as a public agency, cannot exceed the authority granted to it.

Q4: What are the next steps for homeowners who vote for the grinder pump alignment solution?

A: There were two sewer blocks identified with a grinder pump solution in the April 2015 update: 6601-6613 Eastern Avenue, and 6711-6761 Eastern Avenue. *For WSSC to move forward with a grinder pump solution for a sewer block, the March 2016 vote for grinder pumps must be unanimous amongst all homeowners in the sewer block.*

For homeowners who choose to have the grinder pump alignment, WSSC will mail the Right-of-Entry agreement for the homeowner's signature. A plan drawing of the suggested location for the grinder pump will accompany the Right-of-Entry agreement. The homeowner may contact WSSC to discuss a different location for the grinder pump on the homeowner's property. During construction, the contractor will install the grinder pump and new sewer lateral on the homeowner's property. At that time, the contractor will pay for a 10-year extended warranty for the grinder pump, with the homeowner listed as the insured.

Q5: What will WSSC provide to the homeowners who elect to have a grinder pump? Where is the warranty information?

A: WSSC will install an e-One model DH152 dual pump system with 150-gallon tank, and a generator to operate the system in the case of a power outage. The construction contractor will provide a 10-year service and parts warranty from Freemire & Associates (to be added on top of the 2-year manufacturer warranty). The extended warranty information shown on the public website (wsscwater.com/eastern) is a sample of the agreement for which the homeowner can apply *after* the initial 12 years of warranty coverage expires. This document is shown on the webpage to give homeowners an example of expected costs for a future coverage policy. WSSC will not take ownership of the grinder pump system.

Q6: What are the next steps for homeowners who vote for the backyard alignment solution?

A: WSSC has prepared easement documents for all affected homeowners. After the design team receives the final alignment votes, WSSC will schedule appraisals for properties on the backyard alignment. WSSC is paying the full cost to have appraisals completed. WSSC will contact the homeowners with an offer for the appraised value of the easement, and will prepare easement and Right-of-Entry agreements for signature.

WSSC will begin construction after we receive all necessary easement and Right-of-Entry agreements for this project. Any existing permanent structures (i.e., buildings with footings) within the proposed easement must be removed by the homeowner prior to construction. Existing obstructions such as fences and landscaping will be removed by the WSSC contractor and replaced at the end of construction – please note that these obstructions will again be removed by WSSC in the future if we need access for maintenance. Trees within the easement area will be removed by the contractor and will not be replaced within the easement. WSSC will coordinate with the arborist of the City of Takoma Park to determine where replacement saplings will be planted.

Q7: What is this backyard alignment for the 6700 block of Eastern Avenue? I thought that the 6700 block did not have a feasible backyard alignment.

A: Since the March 2015 workshop, WSSC has identified a feasible backyard solution for all homes, using 1st Avenue as the sewer feeding point. This solution was not presented at the March 2015 meeting for the 6700 block of Eastern Ave because homeowners in this block had previously indicated a priority to minimize environmental impacts. This backyard alignment solution presents impacts to trees that exist in the proposed 20-foot easement. However, it is a feasible alignment.

Q8: How will I submit my vote?

A: The Project Manager will have voting forms available at the public meeting, and she will mail voting forms by certified mail to homeowners who cannot attend the meeting or who wish to have their voting form mailed to them. The deadline to submit your vote is March 21, 2016. Voting forms will have the typed name and address of the homeowner(s) who is (are) eligible to complete the vote for the property. Only one vote per property is counted. If a homeowner wishes to have a representative

complete the voting process in their stead, the homeowner must submit a document showing the representative's power of attorney to complete the vote. The Project Manager will share the results of the vote after the March 21, 2016 voting deadline.

Q9: Is there a no-vote option?

A: WSSC has identified the need to replace the existing water and sewer infrastructure along this section of Eastern Avenue. As you can see in the project timeline, permissions from homeowners are the critical path to the construction phase. However, after years of design negotiations, the design team will move forward to complete design this summer regardless of the number of homeowner permissions we receive.

Not submitting a vote will count as a vote for the backyard, easement sewer alignment, as WSSC cannot influence homeowners to incur long-term costs for a grinder pump appliance. If no votes are submitted, WSSC will design the replacement sewer to remain in a backyard alignment and we will not revisit the front yard, grinder pump sewer alignment. WSSC will consider all options to move the project forward to construction with a backyard alignment. In the meantime, the existing sewer will continue to receive maintenance in its current backyard location if an emergency arises.

Q10: Do all measurements used in project documents and presentations assume that the sewer connection will come out of the back of the house? Can all sewer connections be replumbed to come out of the front of the house?

A: Yes. All measurements assume that the sewer connections exit the rear of the homes. Replumbing would be the homeowner's responsibility. WSSC cannot require extensive renovations to the interior of affected homes. We present backyard and roadway alignment solutions that are more cost-effective solutions over renovation; and the alignments are within WSSC's scope as a public water utility.

Q11: Can there be a partial-gravity system applied, where the first floor and up are on gravity sewer to the street and the basement is on a pump? WSSC has previously responded that houses would require too much construction. However, if you are willing to buy us new grinder pumps, why are you not willing to give us money to replumb the bottom of our houses to achieve partial gravity?

A: In 2014, plumbing assessments were conducted and only one-third of homes inspected were identified to support a partial gravity sewer system. All other homes would require internal replumbing and renovation to support such a system. As stated previously, replumbing within the home is the property owner's responsibility. WSSC is not authorized to act as a plumbing company or a construction contracting business. It is a bi-county, public agency of the State providing water and sewer services and the use of its funds is strictly scrutinized by the counties. Each property owner would have to hire a private construction contractor or plumber and WSSC cannot compel property owners to do this. The offer to provide for the 10-year warranty for services through Freemire & Associates is a good faith effort to assist homeowners who elect to convert to a new grinder pump system.