

THE WAINSCOTT WATER SUPPLY DISTRICT: BRINGING “PUBLIC” WATER TO WAINSCOTT

The Town of East Hampton is working with the Suffolk County Water Authority to extend water mains throughout the hamlet

WHAT: Wainscott Water Supply District

WHY: To provide a source of clean drinking water to residents of Wainscott, where ongoing state and county health department testing has revealed the presence of perfluorinated chemicals in a number of private wells. In order to alleviate concerns about present and potential future contamination, an extension of the Suffolk County Water Authority mains throughout the area of concern is planned.

WHERE: The Water Supply District would encompass the Wainscott hamlet, stretching from Industrial Road on the north to Town Line Road on the west, Daniel’s Hole Road and Georgica Pond on the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south.

WHAT ARE THESE CHEMICALS? Perfluorinated chemicals, called PFCs -- particularly two, called PFOA and PFOS -- were once found in a wide variety of products, including degreasers and lubricants, carpet cleaning products, and firefighting foam. They are deemed “emerging contaminants” by federal and state officials, who have established a “health advisory level” for exposure to them, at 70 parts per trillion. Lab results on water from Wainscott wells have found levels both above and below the health advisory level.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? After water contamination from PFCs was discovered in several other Long Island locations, where it was tied to the use of firefighting foam, state and county health officials began an investigation to see if contamination had occurred elsewhere. A testing program of private wells in a “Phase One” and “Phase Two” area of Wainscott, (now expanded), resulted in the chemical detections and the town’s decision to protect residents by having “public” water made available, to address the problem comprehensively and long-term.

The State Department of Environmental Conservation is conducting an investigation aimed at pinning down the exact source or sources of the contamination. The town is providing bottled water, free of charge, to residents whose wells were found to contain chemicals.

WHO PAYS FOR THE NEW WATER MAINS AND HOOK-UPS?

The town will issue bonds to pay for the cost of the project, estimated at \$24.3 million, and is actively working to secure grant funding to offset the cost to taxpayers.

Financing:

The portion of the cost/debt attributed to the extension of the mains will be repaid from the Whole Town, Outside Village fund, with money raised through property taxes on parcels throughout the entire town, excluding the villages. The cost to taxpayers has been estimated, for example, for a house assessed at \$7,000, (a market value of \$1.2 million), at \$35 to \$38 a year, a less than two-percent increase.

The portion of the debt that will cover the cost of hooking up individual private residences to the water main (to be included in the overall scope of the project) will ultimately be paid for by the particular property owners themselves, though the town will cover the cost upfront. Charges apportioned

according to the specific cost of hooking up each house will be added to the Wainscott residents' tax bills, to be amortized over the life of the town's bond (expected to be 20 years).

Grant Funding:

East Hampton Town and the Suffolk County Water Authority will jointly apply for an intermunicipal water infrastructure grant from the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation. While details of the 2018 round of this funding have not yet, as of May 11, been announced, if the application is successful the grant could cover the lesser of \$10 million or 40 percent of the project cost.

Additional Funding:

A bill sponsored by New York State Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele Jr. and Senator Kenneth P. LaValle will clarify the possible use of Community Preservation Funds earmarked for water quality improvements for the water supply district project.

Should the town board and town trustees vote to grant an easement to Deepwater Wind for the South Fork Wind Farm project, the community benefits package that will be provided to the town will include \$1 million for Wainscott water infrastructure improvements.

WHY SHOULD A HOUSEHOLD USE "TOWN WATER" or PUBLIC WATER, ESPECIALLY IF MY WELL TEST WAS FINE?

Chemical contamination can go undetected in the groundwater; a good well test one day does not guarantee that your well will remain untainted. The Suffolk County Water Authority tests its supply wells regularly and reports the results; if PFCs (or other chemicals) are found, treatment systems are installed.

Once water mains are installed, homeowners may choose whether to have their properties hooked up. Ongoing water service will be pursuant to a contract between the property owner and the Water Authority.

TIMETABLE

The town board will convene a special meeting on Monday, May 21, at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall to hold a hearing on establishing the water supply district. A 30-day permissive referendum period will commence after the board votes to establish the district. Bonding could be authorized after that period, with a 20-day Estoppel period to follow before the project can proceed.

The Water Authority has estimated, after health department review of the project, contract design and bidding, etc., construction could begin in August and the project completed, hopefully, by the end of 2018.