

There was an amazing turnout for the May 23rd Sewer Feasibility Study meeting. About 130 owners attended, and the Clubhouse was bursting with people filling 104 seats, observing through the windows, watching the video feed in the back room and hanging out in the kitchen where the food was. After the presentation, a straw vote was taken and a majority of those voting indicated they were in favor of proceeding. Additionally, many called and emailed their support of the proposed sewer project. Some of our good friends and neighbors are opposed, and their concerns are genuine. Many are still in information gathering mode before deciding. What follows outlines the continually developing information about how a sewer would actually happen in our mountain neighborhood.

The presentation was made by Dietrich Stroeh, of CSW/Stuber Stroeh, whom the MWPCA commissioned to do the Feasibility Study covering our entire mountain neighborhood. The study defined six sub-areas, each on a different watershed. Sewer lines would end up at different places at the bottom of the hill. The entire study and other information is available online at: <http://mounttam.org> The MWPCA sewer committee objective is information gathering. They have already met with Steve Kinsey and he is going to advocate with Marin County Public Works and the two Public Sanitary Districts on behalf of our neighborhood.

What Are The Next Steps?

_There are two steps on a neighborhood level: **One is for several people in each area to volunteer to become captains/lieutenants/worker bees in their Study areas. The larger the area, the more needed. Each neighborhood group needs to come together, have meetings, reach out to those who aren't yet informed, and determine just who wants to proceed now, who wants to proceed later and who wants out entirely. Our fervent wish is to reach out to everyone and work out a plan that acknowledges every opinion and accommodates as many as possible.**

_Seed money will have to be raised. The **second step is to form a study group to determine how the overall project will be financed and managed.**

What we will do soon: Right now, we are networking for volunteers for each of the six defined areas. A study group will be formed to examine the financial and management alternatives, come up with a recommendation, and proceed. _We have updated the parcel lists that were on the wall at the meeting and posted them on the website. Please check and review. This is also a developing process, and if you think your property should be designated in another area, that may be correct. The best way for your ideas to be considered is for you to participate . This is your wake-up call to become involved. Call/email us. We will be thrilled to include you. Call 381-3119 or email webmaster@mounttam.org. _We will send out another informational letter to the owners-at-large soon. It will cost about \$300, paid for with the donations many of you have made over the last several years to the sewer committee. For developing updates we will need to send out communications by email for cost reasons. And, of course, there will be updates

on the website. If you are not getting emails from webmaster@mounttam.org, please give us your email address. Group emails to the neighborhood include reminders of events, bus schedule changes, important warnings and neighborhood issues such as this. You will not be inundated, and all large group emails are sent out masked - which means that only the webmaster has your email. **This is your neighborhood; be informed!**

Management

A Sewer Maintenance District, a separate legal entity from the MWPCA, must be formed for the areas - we hope all - wanting to proceed. The County would run it and appoint a local advisory board. The Muir Woods park Sewer Maintenance District (MWPSMD) would make arrangements to build the sewer system which would connect to the Homestead Valley Public Sanitation District (HVPSD) and the Mill Valley Public Sanitation District. The would arrange for treatment rights to use the Mill Valley Treatment Plant and contract for maintenance, operation and administration of the facilities and District.

A sewer maintenance district is a simpler organization than a Public Sanitation District. There are six public sanitation districts that purchase treatment rights to the Mill Valley treatment facility located across from the Middle School. Our proposed pipes from the Sequoia Valley, Madera, Ridge and Chanticleer areas would feed into Homestead Valley Public Sanitation District, and pipes from the Washington Park and upper Edgewood areas would feed into Mill Valley Public Sanitation District.

Boundaries

If one or more of the identified areas wants to opt out entirely, new boundaries can be drawn. If special planning and restrictions are desired in any micro - area, this is the time.

What is it all going to cost?

The construction estimate for the entire neighborhood was about \$6,000,000. There would be another \$1,000,000 in engineering and legal fees and costs to set up the sewer governing body, for an estimated total capital cost of \$7,000,000. The county may bear a small part of this to get the district going, and it is possible that state funds might be secured in the form of a low interest government loan. The capital construction component would bring a sewer line to within connection distance of each participating property. It would be each owner's responsibility to actually connect to the new sewer pipe, at a cost that could range from \$2,000 to \$5,000 for most properties depending on how close you are, what lies between, and any special obstacles. Look at the Study map and find your location, find the nearest proposed sewer line, go outside and walk around and think about how close you are and what obstacles exist. When completed, each owner would also pay a connection fee to the sewer district. For long established Public Sanitation

Districts these are \$3,000 - \$5,000 to add a NEW home. There would be annual sewer fees for maintenance and treatment rights, billed on your property tax statement, which range from about \$250 to \$800 per year in Southern Marin sanitation districts. We understand it is not necessary to dig out your old system and dispose of it. We also caution that this information is preliminary.

Natural questions are:

How would the \$7,000,000 in capital costs be paid for, who would participate and is non-participation an option? There are two basic courses of action.

1. Participation by Choice

With this model, very simply stated, those properties who want to participate would opt in; the overall cost would be divided up between them. To give an example: If 250 owners choose to opt in, dividing \$7,000,000 by 250, each owner would pay \$28,000 all at once to cover the initial capital cost. Owners could of course, borrow the money against credit lines or create a mortgage. If more opt in, the cost per property goes down, If less opt in, the cost goes up. The actual costs may be adjusted between the six identified areas, and issues of unimproved lots, two lots with one house, and so forth will be investigated. A method will be developed to reimburse the owners of the original participating properties with the fees paid by those opting in later. Those opting in later would pay more, according to a predetermined scale.

_2. Assessment

An assessment is similar to the school bonds you presently pay. All properties within the specified boundaries would participate. The assessment is approved by vote, the bonds are bought, and everyone pays the debt back over 20 to 30 years. Two (of many) illustrative approaches are:

_Per Parcel:

One is for every owner to get one vote per parcel. If approved, owners are assessed an equal amount per parcel. This model has obvious issues with those already on sewer, those with far larger/smaller homes than others, those with expensive, recent septic systems and owners of unimproved or unbuildable lots.

Special Benefit:

The second assessment model is to hire engineers to determine the special benefit each lot would receive when the sewer goes in. There is a process for this with room for discussion/appeal and so forth. Those already on sewer or with unbuildable lots would have minimal special benefit. Properties with large relative

value would have greater special benefit than the average single-family house. The weight would confer greater voting power on some properties, but it would also confer proportionally greater capital costs. The range in cost could be large. Whether per parcel or special benefit, the average homeowner would pay (very roughly) something like \$1,500 annually over 20-30 years to retire the bond, in addition to the other annual costs for maintenance and treatment. This would be billed on your property tax statement.