

Written by Edward F. Maroney

### Council held special meeting last night

The 13 people who get to decide whether the town should borrow \$44 million to sewer the Lake Wequaquet area and \$7.2 million to do the same at Stewart's Creek were due on stage at Barnstable High School's Knight Auditorium last night.

Unlike most productions, the reviews on this one are already in before the lights go up. More than 400 protesting residents squeezed into town hall last week, so many that a town council public hearing had to be postponed to last night – and maybe tonight and Monday, until all who wish to speak can be heard.

Mark Ells, director of the town's department of public works, was expected to make the presentation he couldn't June 18, when the town hall hearing room was cleared by Council President Fred Chirigotis, who said its capacity had been exceeded.

The sewer expansion, which includes the Stewart's Creek area as well, would add 3,302 residential and 1,026 commercial customers to the program. The town projects an average annual sewer bill of \$305 for residents.

But add to that a property owner's share of building the system, and a Wequaquet Lake owner would pay a betterment of \$30,900, or another \$1,870 a year for 20 years. Stewart's Creek area owners would pay \$20,500, or another \$1,240 a year for 20 years.

The town is eligible for 2-percent-interest state loans that include an 8.8-percent principal subsidy, but only if quick action is taken.

Prospects for that – at least, quick action that will stick – were thrown into question before last night's meeting by a group prepared to reject a potential affirmative vote by forcing the councilors to reconsider their upcoming action. If they do not rescind the vote, the group planned to gather enough signatures – starting at last night's meeting – to force a referendum on the projects in the fall. The delay could eliminate the funding support from the state.

The campaign was announced on [www.capecog.com](http://www.capecog.com), the Internet blog of Gary Lopez, Sr. Also, Barnstable Councilor Ann Canedy is asking her colleagues, Ells, and Town Manager John Klimm to consider widening the councilors' wastewater committee to include greater citizen representation. The resulting task force would address out-of-pocket expenses, which properties need to be included, and hook-up options.

"We need to pin down as much as possible exactly what those costs will be for each homeowner," Canedy wrote, "and we must find a way to eliminate or greatly reduce those costs. We need to personalize this issue."

Wequaquet Lake and Stewart's Creek are at the top of the "prioritized areas of concern" recommended in



EDWARD F. MARONEY PHOTO

SITTING ROOM ONLY – And even that was running out as more than 400 residents poured into the town hall hearing room June 18 for the town council meeting.

the town's wastewater plan for connection to the treatment plant in Hyannis. At the same time, however, the Massachusetts Estuaries Study is producing numbers on pollution in, for example, the Three Bays area of Cotuit and Osterville that could require swift action by the town, possibly as the result of a legal prod by activist organizations such as the Conservation Law Foundation.