



Barnstable residents fight sewer project

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HYANNIS — A controversial sewer extension project approved this month by the Barnstable Town Council could go to a full town vote in November if councilors don't rescind their support.

Taking advantage of the town's citizen referendum procedures, a group of residents led by Gary Lopez of Centerville has petitioned the town council to rescind its approval of a portion of the \$7.2 million extension project, which would add about 320 homes around Stewarts Creek to the town sewer system.

According to the town charter, if the town council does not rescind its approval, the proposed sewer project will be placed on the fall election ballot.

"We're talking about (a ton of money) and the people have had no input," Lopez said yesterday, referring to the \$20,500 betterment charge originally estimated for each homeowner. "The people should have a say in something like that. The people should definitely be involved."

Town councilors, who approved funding for the first phase of the project in April, initially shot down \$3.3 million in funding for the second phase, largely due to concerns over the cost to homeowners.

But a request last month from residents concerned over the health of the creek prompted the town council to reconsider the project on Aug. 6. The project was approved in a 10-2 vote.

So far, town officials have proceeded with permitting and design plans, including pursuit of a 8.8-percent federal subsidy for the project through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. But they are not sure about the impact of a vote at the polls in November, Public Works Director Mark Ells said yesterday. He declined to comment further.

Town council president Frederick Chirigotis could not be reached for comment last night.

If the town council does not rescind its support for the Stewarts Creek project, it will be included in the Nov. 3 election, according to Town Clerk Linda Hutchenrider. At least 20 percent of town voters must cast ballots in the town election for the vote on the project to count.