



## Voters to decide sewer dispute

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HYANNIS — It may go down in Barnstable history as the Battle of Stewarts Creek.

After six months and three rounds in the Barnstable Town Council, the contentious fight to extend the town sewer system around parts of Stewarts Creek, near Hyannis' West End Rotary, will likely come to an end tomorrow when voters head to the polls.

The proposal — the second part of a two-phased project estimated to cost about \$3.3 million — was first introduced to the town council last spring. It was rejected at first, then approved, and then sent to the ballot for voters to decide — all the while dividing neighbors and town residents over the projected costs versus the gains.

The 160 homeowners who will join the sewer system if the ballot question is approved would face a betterment charge of roughly \$20,500 each, to be paid either in one lump sum or over 20 years.

"This isn't about sewers. It's about how they're going to pay for sewers," said Christine Carey, a Centerville resident and town council candidate, who has campaigned against the Stewarts Creek proposal.

"The town can't afford it, so they're going to put it all on us. ... They're going to price us out of town."

The \$20,500 betterment fee includes an 8.8 percent subsidy delivered through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act — a one-time discount that first prompted the council to take up the proposal last spring.

The stimulus funds are still available for the project, according to Barnstable Finance Director Mark Milne. But they would likely disappear if the project fails tomorrow at the ballot, he said.

"Stewarts Creek is now well degraded already. We have to do something about this," said Milton Berglund, a Hyannis resident and project supporter, "Now is the time, since we already have some federal funding support to do the job."

In addition to the betterment fee, the 160 homeowners, required by state and local law to connect to the sewer system where it's available, would have to pay to connect to the sewer lines, and to secure or remove any current septic systems.

Such costs, which can run into the thousands according to local contractors, can prove even more out of reach for homeowners with recently installed septic systems, residents said.

"I put in a new septic system five years ago; they told me I wouldn't see sewerage here in my lifetime," Hyannis resident Ernie Doody said last week. "That's \$11,000 I won't be getting back. ... And now they want to add \$20,000 more."

Town planners had initially included the Stewarts Creek project as part of their comprehensive wastewater treatment plan, which intends to add about 5,400 homes to the town sewer system over the next seven to 10 years, town officials have said.

In authoring the plan, a citizens advisory group, consisting of 14 Barnstable residents, reviewed area neighborhoods and prioritized them based on location, proximity to water and other factors.

Despite the controversy around Stewarts Creek, the comprehensive plan remains in place, though it is on hold while planners discuss different funding options for future projects, according to Assistant Town Manager Tom Lynch.

"One of the positive benefits of the entire debate is that people ... seem to be focusing on what appears to be one

of the major stumbling blocks, which is the financing," Lynch said. "Under this plan, the people around Stewarts Creek pay 100 percent. But there are other ways. ... That's something that's good to consider."

## Polling places

- Precinct 1: Barnstable-West Barnstable Elementary School, 2463 Main St., West Barnstable
- Precinct 2: St. George's Greek Orthodox Church, 1130 Falmouth Road, Centerville
- Precinct 3: Barnstable Senior Center, 825 Falmouth Road, Hyannis
- Precinct 4: St. George's Greek Orthodox Church, 1130 Falmouth Road, Centerville
- Precinct 5: Cape Cod Academy, 50 Osterville-West Barnstable Road, Osterville
- Precinct 6: Christ Chapel, 2C Oak St., Centerville
- Precinct 7: Cotuit Freedom Hall, 976 Main St., Cotuit
- Precinct 8: Hyannis Youth & Community Center, 141 Bassett Lane, Hyannis
- Precinct 9: Barnstable Town Hall, 367 Main St., Hyannis
- Precinct 10: Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School, 730 Osterville-West Barnstable Road, Marstons Mills
- Precinct 11: West Barnstable Community Building, Meetinghouse Way, West Barnstable
- Precinct 12: Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School, 730 Osterville-West Barnstable Road, Marstons Mills
- Precinct 13: Barnstable Town Hall, 367 Main St., Hyannis

Source: Barnstable Town Clerk's Office