

# Yarmouth seeks wastewater planning funds

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State test results regarding the environmental health of the Lewis Bay, Parkers River and Bass River watersheds are fast approaching, and Yarmouth DPW Director George Allaire wants the town to be ready for them.

Allaire addressed selectmen Tuesday night to discuss an article for this spring's annual Town Meeting which requests \$400,000 for continued wastewater planning. So far, he said, years of work have been funded through surpluses in the septage treatment fund, but those dollars run out July 1.

The major issue, Allaire told selectmen, is the amount of nitrogen in the estuaries. The state studies, he said, will show how much nitrogen exists in the three areas, numbers which the state will then use to set a mandatory Total Maximum Daily Load level. In turn, those TDML levels will help the town plan its wastewater solution, be it sewer-ing, localized packet plants, less expen-

sive alternatives or combinations of all three.

Nitrogen is a fertilizer and too much nitrogen in an estuary can spur the growth of algae. The algae then suck the oxygen out of the water and destroy essential eelgrass beds.

According to Allaire, results for Lewis Bay are expected within the month and results for Parkers and Bass rivers are expected within the next six months to a year.

"I don't want to be dead in the water when we get those results at a time when we should be moving forward," said Allaire.

Allaire emphasized that, without definitive test results, pegging an exact dollar amount for planning is difficult. He said the DPW would probably need between \$200,000 and \$400,000 and that those funds would cover planning for as long as three to four years.

"I don't need \$400,000 for just one year," said Allaire, who added past planning efforts have been running in the ballpark of \$100,000 per year.

Yarmouth Town Administrator Bob Lawton said a Proposition 2 1/2 debt exemption is one option but not the only option. Another possibility, he said, is to phase-in the request in much the same way the town handles roadway work. While the money would still need to be borrowed, it could be done within existing debt capacity. If that were the case, a debt exemption would not be necessary, Lawton said.

Selectman Bill Marasco supported the DPW request and warned that, if delayed, the cost of the town's wastewater solution would only skyrocket.

Selectman Chairman Jim Saben agreed and placed the issue in economic terms. "This is part of economic redevelopment. We can't handle the bigger issues of economic development without dealing with the issue of wastewater."

Selectwoman Suzanne McAuliffe framed the issue in terms of taxpayer cost, saying "This is a huge financial issue that the town will be dealing with in the future."