

Eastham will vote Oct. 1 on municipal water system

By [Doug Fraser](#)

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EASTHAM — Voters will get a second shot at deciding whether they want a \$76 million municipal water system at a special town meeting Oct. 1.

An identical article failed, by just 10 votes, to get the required two-thirds majority at town meeting in May. Proponents believe some voters may not have understood the need, and they said their presentation at town meeting was hampered by poor sound quality in the Nauset Regional High School gymnasium.

Karl Weiss, chairman of the town's water advisory board, says the problem is townwide and getting worse. "I've done this for nine years now, and slowly, but surely, (drinking water quality) is going down," he said.

Regional water studies have also shown the relatively dense home development in Eastham will eventually require a municipal water system, said Thomas Cambareri, the Cape Cod Commission's water resource program manager. "It doesn't make sense to wait until everybody's well goes bad."

According to town estimates, it will cost the average water system user \$200 a year in fees, plus \$200 a year for 20 years to pay off a \$5,000 fee to hook up to the proposed water system. Taxes would also increase as the town secured loans to finance several phases of construction.

Taxes on a \$425,000 home would increase from \$35 the first year to nearly \$200 within a decade, then gradually decline until the loans were paid off in 2064. With other projects being paid off, the town estimates the average tax bill would go up less than \$30 over current levels.

Eastham is the last Cape town that is completely reliant on private wells for its drinking water. Private wells are located near septic systems, the primary source of contamination.

Townwide testing of private wells has shown water quality declining since the monitoring began in 1999.

Weiss said that every year the project is delayed increases its overall cost by \$2 million.

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Water decision

To view public comments and informational documents on the proposed municipal water project go online to: www.eastham-ma.gov/public_documents/index

- Informational meetings will be held at town hall Wednesday at 4 p.m. and Sept. 29 at 9 a.m.
- Town meeting will be at 7 p.m. Oct. 1 at Nauset Regional High School.