



Our wAAtEr Public Advisory Group Meeting #8 Summary

Meeting Date: May 6, 2024

Meeting Time: 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.

Location: Independence Room - 2664 Riva Rd, Annapolis, Maryland 21401 & Microsoft Teams

Anne Arundel County Department of Public Works (DPW)	HDR	Public Advisory Group (PAG)	
Karen Henry	Ed Shea	Elle Bassett <i>Arundel Rivers Federation</i>	Elizabeth Rosborg County Resident
George Heiner	Brian Balchunas	Tammy Domanski <i>Anne Arundel Community College Environmental Center</i>	Tim Williams <i>Water Environment Federation (retired)</i>
Chris Murphy	Ziwei He	Sally Hornor <i>Magothy River Association</i>	Erik Kreifeldt County Resident
Erin Dey	Tucker Cotter	Lloyd Lewis <i>Chesapeake Environmental Protection Association (CEPA)</i>	
Cindy Carrier <i>(AA Office of Planning & Zoning – OPZ)</i>		Doug Nichols <i>Greater Severna Park Council</i>	
Don Curtian <i>(AA Department of Health-HD)</i>			
Al Herb <i>(AA Department of Health-HD)</i>			

Welcome

George and Karen welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for joining. The group went around the room and introduced themselves, including new PAG member Elizabeth Rosborg.

Meeting Purpose & Outreach Updates

Tucker explained the purpose of the meeting was for DPW to provide programmatic updates and facilitate discussion with PAG members.

- Tucker gave an update on programmatic outreach, including the recent DPW Outreach Day event, upcoming River Days, and Septic to Sewer community meetings. George commented that River Days has been a worthwhile outreach series. Karen requested that



dates be shared directly with PAG members via email.

FY25 County Budget

George went over new and anticipated projects in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget. He explained that the County is facing challenges regarding aging infrastructure and new regulations.

- Chris explained that DPW is currently evaluating the construction sequence for the Mayo Septic Replacement Project. Lloyd asked if the community would have the opportunity to provide input on the replacement plan. Chris stated that the County will be interested in receiving input.
- Karen provided an update on Lead & Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR) compliance progress. The County is targeting portions of the system serving homes that were built before 1936 and possibly have lead pipes. Lloyd asked about the County providing funding to homeowners. Karen explained the County is only responsible for pipes on the public side.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

George reported that since the last meeting in February 2024, new federal regulations have been put in place regarding PFAS levels in drinking water.

- Brian clarified that none of the PFAS chemicals addressed in the updated drinking water regulations have been detected in tests in the County from the pilot system.
- George stated moving forward, the State of Maryland will likely require regular PFAS testing.

Wastewater Treatment Enhancements

George explained the significant drop in nitrogen discharge that has occurred since the completion of the nitrogen reduction projects in 2019. He showed how current levels are significantly below the required regulations and that room for improvement has narrowed due to high performance. He explained how the County is currently brainstorming areas for process improvements.

- Elle asked if the County Water Reclamation Facility (WRF) improvements are now outperforming septic in nitrogen removal and if a graphic could be created for educational purposes. George explained it is, however, the County is still working on ways to accurately display this information considering the septic number would be based on estimates. An estimate could be developed based on the number of known tanks, certain location factors, etc.

Minor Systems

George stated prior to the previous PAG meeting, Horizon was issued a fine due to their system failure and discharges. He informed the group that the County is currently working to determine costs for taking over failing private systems and is brainstorming ideas to close the funding gap for the County Executive's Office.



- Lloyd asked if the County has given itself a deadline for solving the problem. George said there is an internal goal of four (4) months for concept development.
- Lloyd asked about what signage could be put in place to advise the public about health risks. Don Curtian, Anne Arundel Department of Health, explained they understand this is an area where a lot of people fish and as a result, they have reached out to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) for a response related to posting notifications, as they are the governing/regulating authority. Don agrees that the Department of Health could disseminate messaging to the community. Elle encouraged the Department of Health to communicate with MDE about all relevant (not only noncompliant) small Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTP) sites.¹ Tammy asked if testing of plant effluent is required to be made available publicly. Elle explained that the MDE site provides weekly emails that identify which plants have violations.

George summarized the role of OPZ managing minor systems, including areas currently in discussion for County takeover and Priority Funding Area (PFA) zone adjustments.

- Cindy clarified the types of zoning around the Waysons Corner area, explaining subdivisions are limited to five (5) homes under the predominate Growth Tier 4 zoning.
- Brian clarified that one zoning option is “denied access” for this area in the Master Plan, which would limit those locations intended to be served by the County’s WWTP replacement project. The group discussed the potential economies of scale related to a combined Patuxent and Waysons Corner project. The County has studied this and the topography (a ravine between the locations) makes it challenging to cost effectively build the projects together.
- Cindy explained Plan 2040, which is a countywide plan for directing growth, and that comprehensive zoning review of the area is to be done in 2026. One focus area is the Waysons Corner area, which was adopted previously with a rural village center, and is entirely within a state priority preservation area. Chris summarized that there are multiple obstacles to growth.
- Tammy asked if DPW has decided on the future WWTP location. George answered that the County will work with Horizon locations first, and then Waysons separately because it is a different owner.

Septic-to-Sewer Update

George provided an update on the current state of the Septic-to-Sewer program, including recent efforts to coordinate with the Department of Health.

- Don explained how the funding and grant request process works, including MDE involvement in decisions and distribution. Don explained the Department of Health received significant cuts to the grants they were awarded last year but has a record of fully using grants on these programs. Currently, the Department of Health has enough

¹ Follow-up note - Health has had signage made and purchased. Recreation and Parks staff have installed the signs. The signs are made of steel so they will last long term.



funding for about 10 more Best Available Technology (BAT) units or sewer connections. Funding will likely run out in the current fiscal year, and the County is planning to ask for at least \$4.5M in the next cycle. AA Health requested \$4.8 Million for the FY25 Grant. \$2.6 Million was awarded on July 3 by the Board of Public Works. A substantial reduction but \$100,000 more than last year. Already there have been over 25 awards granted for this grant period.

- Tim asked how many systems are funded annually. Don said about 200 BATs and 15 sewer connections. For the FY24 Grant there were 148 BAT units installed and 13 sewer connections paid for by the BRF Grant. The Health Dept. originally received \$2.5 Million, and another \$400,000 in January for a total of \$2.9 Million. With all the units installed and sewer connections, all of the Grant was spent but \$4,846.
- Elle asked about legislation introduced to add precedence for priority systems near streams. Don explained that the Department of Health supported the bill in part, but not the portion pertaining to funding for engineering. MDE wanted to also use funding for mapping. Elle asked if mapping is a challenge for the Department of Health? Don explained that most of the small streams in the county are already mapped as part of critical areas, but this may not be the case for the rest of the state.
- George asked if people call the Department of Health to ask for their septic tank to be inspected. Don answered that most of the time if drain fields are saturated, fills tank back up, and homeowners will call private contractors to inspect and repair. Health does not inspect tanks or BATs after installations. That is an owner's responsibility.
- Elizabeth asked if, when homeowners finance BAT systems, they sign a maintenance agreement that the system will be inspected and reported to the County. Don explained that this applies to BATs, but not septic tanks – BAT units are inspected every year for the first 5 years. After the 5 years maintenance that is included in the Grant, it is the owner's responsibility and a COMAR requirement to have the BAT inspected annually and any corrections made.
- Karen reported that for septic connections to the public sewer, the recent tap permitting has gone well and is less confusing than the previous process. Homeowners are required to hire their own contractor.
- Tammy asked if homeowners choose to upgrade to BAT, what is the service life. Don explained it depends on location and how well the system is being maintained.
- Sally asked how many of the 1300 potential individual sewer connections (in the PFA) are in the critical area. Ziwei replied it is about 25%.
- Tammy asked if there could be a prioritization of homes that get the Bay Restoration Fund (BRF) vs. BRF plus Watershed Protection & Restoration Program (WPRP), including the critical area as criteria for increased funding. Karen and George explained there has historically not been that type of targeted outreach.
- Elizabeth asked about new homes on Broadneck Peninsula, where there is already sewer connection on one side of Route 2. Karen explained that new developments are not



eligible for any special assistance programs but are receiving taps as the sewer is installed. This represents a lot of future potential for connections in the future.

- Doug asked if DPW will return to Chartwell to discuss septic conversion. George said t going forward no outreach is planned unless the community expresses renewed interest.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

George thanked everyone for their participation and noted the group will reconvene in August or September 2024. PAG members were encouraged to express interest in topics to cover at the next meeting. Tammy expressed interest in another legislative update.