

12/10/15

Members of the Board

I speak tonight in an attempt to clearly, fully, and as briefly as possible articulate my concerns regarding the Sewer problem facing our town .

Apparently, there is bill of \$1.5 million dollars due to avoid a catastrophic failure of our system.

This Board will have to determine how that bill will be paid by the referendum proposal you put forth to our voters in the next election.

It is my contention that the Sewer policies, prices, and procedures have been mismanaged for a good number of years in our town for a bill of this magnitude and urgency to have surfaced.

Please know that I place no blame on past decisions, practices, or leadership. Blame is not helpful or appropriate. I can say only that I and most of us in the South Eliot neighborhood have been paying our sewer bills under the assumption the Town was paying attention to our sewer infrastructure. Clearly this is not the case.

For purposes of brevity I offer two concrete examples:

1.) Appropriations for new pumps were approved in 2005—\$18,000. And yet, as of your workshop two weeks ago, nobody within the Town government knew or was willing to say for certain if that work was ever done. Surely somebody or some governing Board or Committee should have made sure the work was done at that time. That nobody knows for sure certainly doesn't suggest sound management. I can tell you for certain that the sewer bill for 22 Park Street was paid on time then and continues to be paid on time now. My family and I keep our end of the deal.

2.) The current sewer ordinance was adopted in November of 2013. I read the ordinance in its entirety and in several places readers are directed to Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. Over two years have passed since the ordinance was approved and yet no such appendices exist. The pages are blank. The Sewer ordinance currently available to the public is incomplete. That is not sound management; that is a lack of attention. I can assure you that when I pay my bill, I pay the full amount. I keep my end of the deal. I appeal to our Selectmen see to it that these Appendices for the Sewer ordinances are written or have reference to them removed from the ordinance.

Last November, this Board proposed to the voters by a 4-0 vote with the chair concurring to have sewer users pay the full \$1.5 million dollars for repair and upgrades to our system. And yet at least three Selectmen on this Board have stated publicly or personally to me that they do not support sewers users paying the full bill. If that is the case, how did such a vote as the one offered last November even appear on the ballot? For sure, my expectation is that you folks back up your positions with the official votes you cast.

And now just a bit about the irony or shall I say hypocrisy of a current proposal being discussed by the Board to pay for the sewer problem. When many of us in town sought to have the 236 project voted on a second and yes, third time by the voters, there are members of this Board who resisted, rejected and ridiculed our attempts to continue to educate voters and ask them to rethink their positions. We were told the voters had spoken, don't ask them again. I was called a "sore-loser." Now, it seems the Board may, in fact, be entertaining the idea to ask the voters to vote again on the very same questions they have already voted on. Either it's OK to ask to ask voters on the same question more than once or it isn't. Either I'm not the only "sore-loser" or certain members of this Board have seen the light.

Finally, I would ask members of this Board to acknowledge that in the past Eliot's public sewer system has been mismanaged by Town officials charged with managing it, and rather than find blame, accept responsibility and make the situation right. The Selectmen can move forward by presenting voters with choices they have not yet seen: 100% paid by the Town or a different ratio than has been proposed in the past. That's the choice will lead to a solution. That's a choice that keeps us working together as a community .

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Eliot

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