

To the Editor,

To follow up on the front page article in the April 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the Town Crier, it is ironic that at the same time the article was being posted, a large public meeting was being held in the Town offices to discuss the Route 20 sewer project. Members from the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Planning Board, Route 20 Sewer Technical Advisory Committee, Sudbury Water District, Board of Health and Conservation Commission were present, as well as representatives from all the retail plazas along Route 20, including Sudbury Farms, Gravestar, Sudbury Crossing, Rugged Bear, Mill Village, and the president of the Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. The meeting was convened to update all the groups on the progress of the project so that informed decisions can be made at the May 2 Town Meeting, where Article 20 will ask the residents to authorize a \$1 million debt exclusion for the design and permitting of the sewer system.

The need to sewer the commercial district has not changed in the last 20 years. In fact it has become more critical as businesses are faced with costly septic system repairs and fewer options to discharge wastewater in an area of high groundwater conditions and poor soils. Sudbury's commercial corridor is at a competitive disadvantage due to these challenges. Reliance on on-site septic systems severely limits the ability of property owners to attract new tenants, particularly restaurants and food services. Additionally, the discharge of wastewater along Route 20 has the potential to degrade Sudbury's drinking water supply. The wells that produce 60 percent of Sudbury's drinking water are located directly south of the Route 20 corridor.

Thursday's meeting focused on how to pay for the upcoming article, as well as how the full sewer system will be financed, and on whose shoulders the costs will fall. The Town's consultant, Weston & Sampson, provided options for financing the full project, estimated at \$15 million. The Town will have the ability to assess betterments to the properties fronting the sewer system for the construction phase. No decisions were made regarding the cost apportionment between Sudbury taxpayers and the system users. However the plaza owners indicated that the costs that they are faced with to repair and replace their septic systems over the next 10 years is likely greater than what the cost for the sewer system will be, and conceptually they support moving forward with the expectation that a significant portion of the cost, if not the total cost, will be paid by the users.

The financing of the \$1 million design portion to be voted on at Town Meeting also has options. Many at the meeting thought that this phase of the project should be paid for by all taxpayers, as the long term viability of the Route 20 business district, as well a protection of our water supply, benefits all residents. Costs for this phase, if apportioned to all taxpayers, would cost the average residential property (assessed at \$628,000) approximately \$35/year for 5 years, or \$175 total. The average commercial property (assessed at \$810,357) would pay approximately \$60/year for 5 years, or \$300 total.

If design funding is approved this year, and construction funding is approved in 2013, the Town could see a sewer system along the Route 20 corridor by 2015. An 18 month design and permitting period, and a 2 year construction period, is anticipated. The system would be designed for both sustainability and growth in the commercial districts, and new zoning is envisioned to ensure that properties grow in locations that are preferable and appropriate, uses are compatible for our vision of Sudbury, and so that over-development does not occur. New growth will enhance the tax revenue from the commercial sector, and potentially relieve some of the residential tax burden, which is another town-wide benefit to sewerage the area. Rezoning is an integral part of this project, and will be undertaken in a community process with wide input from residents and businesses.

The time is now to make this work. Delaying it could stop the project, as the momentum is high and the groundwork has been laid. We have completed our feasibility, are in line for a low interest loan from DEP for the construction phase, and are garnering support from the business community. Protection of Sudbury's environment and quality of life is at stake. Additional information will be available as we get closer to Town Meeting on the potential economic impacts of the project.

Sincerely,

Lisa Eggleston, Chairman, Route 20 Sewer Technical Advisory Committee