

NEW LONDON SPRINGFIELD WATER SYSTEM PRECINCT

72 Old Dump Rd

New London, New Hampshire 03257

603-526-4441 - nlswp@tds.net

Town of New London  
Selectmen's Office

NOV 06 2024

RECEIVED

November 1, 2024

To the New London Board of Selectmen

The Board of Commissioners, on behalf of the Water Precinct, wishes to address several important facts and issues that have emerged over the past couple of years, which are adversely affecting our overall operations.

The Precinct's current water source, located on Colby Point, was developed in the mid-1990s to comply with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, specifically the amendments enacted in 1996. The six gravel-packed wells are permitted by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to extract up to 750,000 gallons of water per day, based on pump tests that determined our maximum capacity. However, to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of the wellfield, the extraction rate was throttled back to approximately 650,000 gallons per day.

Over time, the efficiency of the wells has gradually diminished due to the infiltration of fine sand, which restricts the volume of water that can flow to each well. Based on pumping data, our capacity ranges from 430,000 to 530,000 gallons per day, with various factors influencing this range.

Several developments have positively impacted water consumption within the Precinct:

1. **Development Rights Acquisition:** The Ausbon Sargent Land Trust has secured development rights and easements, helping to safeguard important water resources.
2. **Enrollment Fluctuations at Colby-Sawyer College:** Changes in student enrollment have influenced overall water demand over the years.
3. **Middle School Relocation:** The relocation of the Middle School to Sutton has affected consumption patterns.
4. **Integration of the Sewer Department:** The transition of the Sewer Department into the New London Public Works Department, along with significant rate increases, has prompted many water consumers to adopt conservation measures to manage their sewer bills.

5. **Boundary Maintenance:** The Commissioners have been proactive in maintaining the Precinct's existing boundaries, allowing for growth through the expansion of properties seeking to join.

These factors have collectively contributed to a more sustainable approach to water usage in the Precinct.

Over the past decade, the Precinct has experienced modest growth, averaging two new service applications per year. This steady pace has allowed us to maintain an adequate water supply and sufficient fire flow.

However, in 2022, the Town of New London approved zoning ordinance changes that reduced the density in the commercial zone from 10,000 square feet to 5,000 square feet per unit, aiming to increase opportunities for rental housing development within the Precinct. Subsequently, over the past few years, the Town also expanded allowances for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) that overlap the Precinct.

Both changes have negatively impacted the Precinct's ability to meet water demand, and they were neither anticipated nor discussed with the Commissioners prior to approval. Additionally, it is concerning that two major development projects have received final approval from the New London Planning Board without a confirmed water supply from the Precinct.

Moving forward, the Precinct voters approved \$30,000.00 in 2022 to look at options for additional water source development. That study did not recommend additional development on the Colby Point Wellfield. It was concentrated on potential bedrock well sites in and around the Town of New London area. The exploration and development of a municipal well is estimated to be around \$11-\$12 million dollars. The report also looked at a surface water draw (probably Little Lake Sunapee) along with a pump station and a treatment plant. It was stated that this surface water option would cost \$25 million. This option is not a favorite with NH DES and probably would be controversial at the local level. These options would require land acquisitions or a lease agreement to move forward.

In 2024 The Precinct voters approved a warrant article for \$20,000. This provided for evaluating the next phase for water options. NHDES has weighed in on the Precinct reviewing Colby Points ability to provide more water. The Commissioners asked Emory & Garrett along with Barrie Miller to submit a proposal to look at any further potential for Colby Point as that is where our current infrastructure exists. This evaluation will either affirm or negate any future use of Colby Point. (It is important to mention that even if Colby Point has further potential, it may be just supplemental capacity and not necessarily be adequate for large scale projects.)

In 2019, the Precinct engaged Underwood Engineering to conduct a comprehensive study of our rates and asset evaluation. As a result of their analysis, they developed a schedule of rates, and a system development charge designed to support the Precinct in the development of new or supplemental water sources. The system development account currently holds \$23,491.50 designated for water development initiatives.

As you are aware, the Precinct is undertaking a \$5 million, 20-year bond for the replacement of the water transmission main on Main Street. This essential project represents a significant long-term financial commitment for the Precinct over the next two decades.

While we recognize the Town of New London's interest in expanding housing opportunities, the burden should not fall solely on the Precinct to cover the costs of developing and providing water. The Commissioners believe that, despite minimal growth in the Precinct over the past decade, recent zoning changes—approved by the entire town—encourage growth from the outside in.

If the Town wishes to increase density within the Precinct boundaries, it is only fair that the Town contributes to the development of new municipal water sources to meet the increased demand.

In closing, the Precinct fully supports the Town of New London's efforts to enhance housing opportunities. We believe that sustainable growth must be matched with adequate resources, particularly in water supply. Therefore, we encourage the Town to initiate discussions on how it can support the Precinct in identifying and funding additional water sources. Collaborative efforts in this area will ensure that the growing demand for water aligns with the Town's housing initiatives, ultimately benefiting the entire community.