



Testa Challenges Somers Connection to Peekskill Sewer District

Public Hearing to be held on Monday, March 15, 2010 in White Plains

Article below by Jim Roberts appeared on PeekskillDaily.com on 3/11/10:

A plan to let Somers connect to the county's Peekskill Hollow sewer district is drawing fire from opponents who charge future development in the Peekskill-Cortlandt area could be harmed.

A public hearing and a vote by the county board are scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Monday, March 15 at the county board of legislators in White Plains.

Development of an 80-acre parcel in Somers, beginning with construction of a 72-unit senior affordable housing complex, requires approval from the county board to build a new sewer trunk line and allow sewer wastewater to flow to the Peekskill facility.

The Peekskill site, which has a potential capacity of 10 million gallons per day, currently operates at 6.6 million gallons daily according to the County Department of Planning.

The new Somers connection would initially create a daily flow of 100,000 gallons, with an additional 25,000 gallons being added from the Somers Commons Shopping Center, which sits in the Peekskill Hollow district.

If the Somers project couldn't connect to the Peekskill system, an onsite wastewater treatment system would have to be built to protect the drinking water supply in the Croton Reservoir watershed, where the Somers parcel rests. Fewer affordable housing units could be built because of the added expense, the county planning department states.

County Legislator John Testa, who represents Peekskill and Cortlandt, says the Peekskill sewage treatment was built to handle the present and future needs of this region and not other parts of the county. Future development in Peekskill and new sewer districts in Cortlandt for homes still using septic systems could be blocked in future years.

"The capacity of the Peekskill sewer plant was designed to incorporate the parcels within the Peekskill watershed," he said. "That's the main reason why we have it to protect drinking water. This could possibly take away the capacity for parcels within the town of Cortlandt that aren't hooked in yet. It could impact the people who the plant was designed to accommodate - they could be closed out," Testa said.

Michael Kaplowitz, the county legislator who represents the Somers area, says the new connection will still leave plenty of capacity for future development.

"It's a win across the board," Kaplowitz said. "First and foremost, it's a vote for affordable housing and an opportunity to help a sister community to create jobs and economic development, which is good for the entire region. It will create no impairment to the Peekskill district and allows Peekskill to continue its own economic development knowing that it has full capacity available," Kaplowitz said.

Allowing outside communities to take up even a minor amount of capacity now in the Peekskill sewer district could be the first step, Testa said.

"Once you open the door, the fear is what will start pouring in down the road. It's a 72-unit senior housing project now and then the plans for the near future are for a 150-unit condo, a restaurant and other things and who knows what comes after that and after that," Testa said.

A proposal several years ago to allow the Hallock's Mill Brook area in Yorktown connect to the Peekskill sewer district, which would have consumed 1.5 million gallons of capacity, created a firestorm of protest when opponents charged that "environmental racism" was involved. The plan was eventually dropped.

Kaplowitz said this current request is a minor amount of volume and will bring more tax dollars into the Peekskill sewer district.

"There is a modest impact and a financial gain for everybody," he said. "It's an opportunity for Peekskill and Cortlandt to help Somers as in the past Somers has helped Peekskill with a lot of their projects."

But Testa is seeking support for his opposition at the board meeting Monday night in White Plains.

"They called a special meeting for this coming Monday to have a special hearing and a vote on the same night. I'm

going to try and get people down there so at the very least we can prevent the vote. If there's a lot of opposition to something I don't think you should be voting on it the same night."

Kaplowitz said the board's budget and public works committee will take a recess and hold a meeting after the public hearing to discuss the comments before any vote. "It's possible the vote could be delayed. Democracy is always a non-linear process," he said.

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Call the members of the Westchester County Board of Legislators to voice your opposition to this proposed plan. Their contact information can be found on the [Westchester County Board of Legislators website](#)

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Citizens for Testa - PO Box 2413, Peekskill, 10566, United States