



Frequently Asked Questions

January 2024

As Executive Director, I sincerely hope this is a good start toward giving you answers to some of the questions that you have. I have an amazing staff, and I expect that once you start hearing the truth about our operations, you will at least understand why we do what we do, even if you're unhappy having to pay for our services. I can tell you for certain that there are current customers who should be very happy that we connected them to the sewer system and safely filled in their cesspool before their car fell into it. /S/ Mark Nimiroski

Is Tiverton Wastewater District (TWWD) run by the town?

No, TWWD is a non-profit municipal corporation created by an act of legislation in 2014. We are responsible to fund our own operations, create our own policies, and maintain, operate, and update our system. You can find our enabling legislation here:

https://www.twwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/TWWD_Enabling_Legislation_2014-S2805_AsAmmended.pdf

Is there any benefit to the TWWD not being run by the town?

Only TWWD customers pay for the sewer service. TWWD receives no tax revenue from the Town of Tiverton. If you aren't in the sewer area, you do not pay for our service.

How is TWWD staffed and who oversees it?

TWWD is run by a full-time Executive Director who supervises four part-time staff: an Office Manager, a Bookkeeper, an Engineer, and a Superintendent. We are governed by a Board of Directors that consists of no more than 7 members and no fewer than 5. The board meets monthly, and a quorum consists of 4 voting members. Currently, TWWD has the minimum membership of 5 directors. Over the last year we had 3 resignations from the board, one reinstatement to the board, and 2 appointments of new members to the board. This has resulted in a stable number of members, but recruitment of qualified volunteers remains a challenge.

Does TWWD force people to connect to the sewer?

There is a Rhode Island State Law that requires people to connect to the sewer. It is called the Rhode Island Cesspool act of 2007, and it was amended in 2014. RIDEM has some good information on this law on their website at:

<https://dem.ri.gov/environmental-protection-bureau/water-resources/permitting/septic-onsite-wastewater-treatment-7>

TWWD is responsible for making sure that the legally required connections are made. We are here to help you comply with the State Law. If you have a functioning and certified inspected septic system, you can apply for a 3-year waiver from having to connect. You can apply for this waiver two times, so that is a 6-year potential waiver. Residents with a waiver are still required to pay the betterment fee and operation and maintenance fees for the main line at the street. This is because all the properties in the service area will eventually be connected to the sewer, and the cost of the system, including maintenance, must be shared by everyone in that service area.

Did TWWD destroy personal property during the Phase 1 Project?

TWWD staff have not done any construction work in the project area. Our contractor D'Ambra Construction has done all the construction for the current Phase 1 project. They have done a remarkable job with some extremely difficult installations. They have shown great care with personal property and have been responsive to our customers' concerns. I can honestly say that I am proud of our partnership. If something was broken and it wasn't made right, it is because the property owner failed to report the damage to the contractor. If you have a concern about damage that was done, the procedure is to contact D'Ambra and file a claim. Please contact us for that information. Because they finished in December, they were unable to complete some of the final landscaping activities. They will be back in the spring to spread loam and seed as necessary. They are contractually obligated to complete this work to our satisfaction.

Does the sewer cause flooding in the road during rainstorms?

The sewer is a closed system, and unless something goes horribly wrong, water from the sewer system should not affect road drainage in any way. Stormwater drainage from roads in town is maintained by either Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) or the Town of Tiverton Department of Public Works

How do you calculate my bill?

Each bill has two parts: 1. Sewer usage; and, 2. Operations, Maintenance and Administration (OMA) fees. The sewer usage is based on your water use, so it varies by customer. This cost is basically passed through to the City of Fall River because they provide treatment for the sewage we collect. TWWD has no control over the rate they charge us. The OMA funds pay for the operation and maintenance of the sewer infrastructure of the district.

Why did I get two TWWD bills?

For new customers in our Phase 1 Sewer Expansion Project area, many of you chose to sign up for the payment plan for the \$18,000 assessment to connect to the sewer. If you are one of these customers, you

will get a separate bill from Southcoast Payroll for the duration of the payment plan, or until you pay it off. This is separate from the bill mentioned above.

Why do we need sewers in town?

Installing and maintaining a functioning septic system can be difficult for a homeowner to manage, especially in parts of town with older building infrastructure, small building lots, poor draining soils, or other complicating factors. There is no way that every individual property owner can upkeep their system perfectly, so in most cases centralized sewage treatment results in cleaner water. This means that the rivers, streams, and Bay that we all enjoy are cleaner and have healthier wildlife.

What was the benefit of the Phase 1 expansion project?

Many of the customers in the Phase 1 area fell into a specific category of the Cesspool Phaseout Act. They are within 200 feet of the shoreline and would have to IMMEDIATELY upgrade their septic system with the customer absorbing the full cost. These customers were connected to the sewer at a relatively low cost compared to a new septic system installation and maintenance. Some of the homes in this project area would not have been able to install an acceptable solution to sewage treatment at any price and therefore would not be able to get an occupancy permit. These houses would have been condemned. TWWD was able to secure loan and grant funding that helped reduce the cost of extending the sewer line and the connection of customers. Similar projects in nearby communities have cost customers twice as much or more. Additionally, our customers had the benefit of TWWD staff managing the connection project for them. Connecting a home to a sewer can be a difficult project to manage and would be hard for the average customer to take on given how busy we all are. The time, effort, and expertise required to get bids, select a contractor, and manage such a project can be considerable.

I pay my TWWD assessment bill on time; why does TWWD have a lien on my house?

TWWD placed a lien on all properties that had connections done in the Phase 1 sewer expansion project. This was explained as part of the user agreements that everyone signed. Customers who paid the full amount of the assessment had the lien immediately removed. Customers who did not pay the full amount of the project assessment and are using our payment plan instead will continue to have the lien on their property until the full amount is paid off. The lien provides collateral to ensure that assessment is paid in full, similar to a mortgage providing collateral for a home loan. And remember, unlike most mortgages, the payment plan for TWWD assessments is transferable to a new owner of the property.

Why hasn't TWWD answered my questions on the Tiverton Happenings page?

As many of us have seen, the comments section on that page can get ugly. There are a lot of opinions from people who have just enough information to make a convincing sounding argument. The fact is that they are often incorrect and are either intentionally or unintentionally spreading misinformation. I ask that if you have a question, please reach out to us directly and give us a chance to answer you ourselves.

When is Phase 2 starting?

Because of the many challenges we encountered over the past few years TWWD staff want to take some time to analyze our performance on Phase 1 before proceeding to Phase 2. We expect to have this analysis completed by the end of June 2024. Following this analysis, we will begin the process of seeking funding sources, and establishing the scope and timeline of the project based on available funds. We hope to be prepared to start to execute securing funding for this phase around December 2024.

How much is Phase 2 going to cost customers?

Costs can be difficult to forecast. As many of you know our Phase 1 project cost \$18,000 per customer as the rest of the cost of the project was covered by grants we obtained. We worked hard to keep costs affordable and offer a payment plan. As part of our planning for Phase 2 next year, we will seek funding from loans and grants. Once we have a handle on how much funding we have, we will decide what the scope of the project can be. The total cost of the project minus loans and grants, divided by number of customers, will give us the cost of the project per customer. We will change the scope of the project to fine tune the cost per customer, mindful that there are sometimes costs that are just too high to be borne by our customers. We are very sensitive to that issue.