

Letter: Why Westport needs the Route 6 water/sewer project

Posted Thursday, March 7, 2024 2:39 pm

On April 9th, Westport voters will have the opportunity to authorize borrowing for the first phase of the Route 6 water and sewer project. If funding is approved at the ballot and then at Town Meeting in May, the project will import clean drinking water from and export sewage to Fall River. In the future, as the project's phase's progress, it will provide North Westport's neighborhoods with clean drinking water and remove significant amounts of nitrogen contaminants from flowing into portions of the Westport River's east branch, allowing the river to achieve its full environmental, recreational and economic potential.

Adequate sewer systems play important roles in sanitation and disease prevention. Wastewater can contaminate the local environment and drinking water supply, thereby increasing the risk of disease transmission. To improve health, it is vital to develop a system to manage community wastewater and sewage.

The neighborhoods next to Route 6 have a history of well contamination from septic system discharges and industrial spills that polluted the groundwater. Neighborhoods with small lots that have septic systems and wells close to each other are particularly vulnerable to nitrogen contamination, making the water unsafe for infants, pregnant women and the elderly to drink. In the areas planned to receive clean water, hundreds of wells have been contaminated.

In addition, a new drinking water health threat has emerged from a family of chemicals known by the acronym PFAS. PFAS was incorporated into scores of different products used daily in our homes and businesses. PFAS contamination increases the risk of cancer and impairs immune and hormone systems. Recent testing by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) detected unsafe levels of PFAS in businesses along Route 6 and in multiple homes in North Westport.

Nitrogen contamination of the river poses a different threat. Excess nitrogen acts as a fertilizer promoting algae blooms that block sunlight essential to maintain eelgrass beds, and absorb the oxygen necessary for all marine life. Eelgrass provides a nursery, food source, and refuge for multiple marine species, serving a crucial role in the town's aquaculture and fishing economy. The death of hundreds of acres of eelgrass over the preceding decades is largely due to nitrogen pollution from septic systems. It's the reason why the river is out of compliance with state and federal water quality standards.

The portions of the river in the vicinity of Route 6 have the highest nitrogen concentrations. As the sewer phases of the project are completed, those nitrogen loads will be pumped out of the watershed to be treated and removed, and the clean effluent discharged in Fall River. The more nitrogen is totally removed from our watershed by sewer the less likely DEP will return to mandate individual septic system upgrades in order to achieve river water quality standards.

The Board recently extended the cesspool phase-out date to 2028 in anticipation of a positive vote for the sewer. As design and construction progresses, the Board will continue to coordinate its regulations in order to avoid conflicts between the mutual objectives of these joint public health and environmental restoration initiatives.

Communities are often confronted with public health and environmental problems that individuals are hard pressed to know what they can do to make a positive difference. In this case there is straightforward answer, vote to support the Route 6 sewer project.

Tanja Ryden

Phil Weinberg

Donna Amaral

The signed are members of the Westport Board of Health.

0 comments

Sort by **Oldest**



Add a comment...

Facebook Comments Plugin

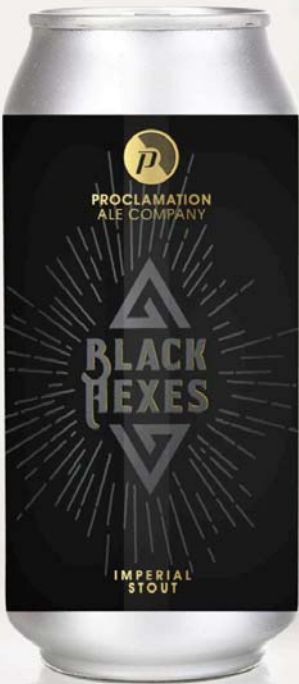
OTHER ITEMS THAT MAY INTEREST YOU

Commentary: Why Westport needs Route 6 project (/westport/stories/commentary-why-westport-needs-route-6-project,120405)


Letter: Stop threatening cuts — right Westport's ... (/westport/stories/letter-stop-threatening-cuts-right-westports-financial-ship,120077)


Letter: Want a dictator? Be careful what you wish for (/westport/stories/want-a-dictator-be-careful-what-you-wish-for,120076)


Letter: Numbers tell the tale of our foundering ... (/westport/stories/letter-numbers-tell-the-tale-of-our-foundering-economy,119894)



Sláinte To Sexy Stouts - Motif


Six Pack Brewing

Follow



Stouts are sexv. Yes, you read that correctlv. Hear me out on this: You are sitting at the bar, checking out the hot guv or girl...

Reliable Help
For Your
Home's
To-Do
List!



Learn More

surv

(<https://eastbayriads.creativecirclemedia.com/www/delivery/cl.php?>

bannerid=6357&zoneid=1&sig=974912885e8d454cd3536b97d1d823895c19abc0e7d1366f40d459d35c7b2194&oadest=https%3A%2F%2Fwesurv.com%2F)



(<https://eastbayriads.creativecirclemedia.com/www/delivery/cl.php?>

bannerid=6269&zoneid=1&sig=beabf9bf0e463cef0e5ddbd8aae737e67a95d1ee09e92d1cffcac84833a09f60&oadest=http%3A%2F%2Fgetreadytodate.com)



(<https://eastbayriads.creativecirclemedia.com/www/delivery/cl.php?>

bannerid=6355&zoneid=1&sig=f51c76e1a8f3b3b97c71349ace5a4552dfb057edcfce39d852220bf5159094be&oadest=http%3A%2F%2Fstmaryofthebay.org)

SIGN UP FOR OUR FREE NEWSLETTERS!

Click here to sign up ... ►

(<https://eastbaynewsletters.carrd.co/>)



(<https://eastbayriads.creativecirclemedia.com/www/delivery/cl.php?>

bannerid=6365&zoneid=1&sig=410d6e15aaf6f032cbcd37a590968d8f1e6361b11131346352705a71fa12e36f&oadest=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.RALCOGenerator.com)

TRENDING

Westport police: Stolen car recovered in Pawtucket (/westport/stories/westport-police-stolen-car-recovered-in-pawtucket,120444)

Bay View Players take top prize at Rhode Island Drama Festival (/westport/stories/bay-view-players-take-top-prize-at-rhode-island-drama-festival,120411)

Westbound bridge span must be completely replaced (/westport/stories/westbound-bridge-span-must-be-completely-replaced,120546)



(<https://eastbayriads.creativecirclemedia.com/www/delivery/cl.php?>

bannerid=6349&zoneid=1&sig=9699b0b10c1bc2b6ee278387f63beb2a500d34c706f1fcca3d03e9f2c5825d32&oadest=https%3A%2F%2Fcsmfittnessusa.com%2F)



(<https://eastbayriads.creativecirclemedia.com/www/delivery/cl.php?>

bannerid=6294&zoneid=1&sig=a71d14e0a194d3f09982108fc3c86f038907755ab8d3f48d37b200cd1dc11a8&oadest=http%3A%2F%2Fsmilebuilder.com%2F)



(<https://eastbayriads.creativecirclemedia.com/www/delivery/cl.php?>

bannerid=6370&zoneid=1&sig=d0ea07b96164084472a04b1048fd03b3fa66c89c46cacafba910817f7bd6189a&oadest=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fpages%2FWexle

STAY INFORMED!



(<https://eastbayriads.creativecirclemedia.com/www/delivery/cl.php?>

bannerid=6339&zoneid=1&sig=9f587a1d5fb3ac18db06c54b54063034baf62d8de839c4d6cbb616f6a39dcf51&oadest=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.sansonefuneralhome.com)

YOUR COMMUNITY. YOUR STORIES. YOUR INBOX.

Sign up for our free newsletter today! ▶

(<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/5dUmq8A>)

EastBayRI

©2024 by East Bay Media Group

BARRINGTON • BRISTOL • EAST PROVIDENCE • LITTLE COMPTON • PORTSMOUTH • TIVERTON • WARREN • WESTPORT

MEET OUR STAFF

Jim McGaw

A lifelong Portsmouth resident, Jim graduated from Portsmouth High School in 1982 and earned a journalism degree from the University of Rhode Island in 1986. He's worked two different stints at East Bay Newspapers, for a total of 18 years with the company so far. When not running all over town bringing you the news from Portsmouth, Jim listens to lots and lots and lots of music, watches obscure silent films from the '20s and usually has three books going at once. He also loves to cook crazy New Orleans dishes for his wife of 25 years, Michelle, and their two sons, Jake and Max.

QUICK LINKS






[Manage subscription \(/account/\)](#)

[About Us/Contact Us \(/contact/index.html\)](#)

[Advertise With Us \(/advertise\)](#)

[Place An Obituary \(https://ezads.eastbayri.com/adportal/obits/index.html?clear_cache=adportalCache\)](https://ezads.eastbayri.com/adportal/obits/index.html?clear_cache=adportalCache)

[Terms of Use \(/terms/\)](#)

 (<https://www.facebook.com/eastbayri>)  (<https://plus.google.com/+Eastbayri>)  (<https://instagram.com/eastbayri/>)  (<https://twitter.com/eastbayri>)  (<https://www.youtube.com/user/EastBayNews>)