

CUMBERLAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL COMMUNITY MEETING
GRAY'S CREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
2964 SCHOOL ROAD, HOPE MILLS, NC
SEPTEMBER 27, 2011 – 7:00 PM
MINUTES

PRESENT: Commissioner Kenneth Edge, Chairman
Commissioner Jeannette Council
Commissioner Charles Evans
Commissioner Ed Melvin
Commissioner Billy King
James Martin, County Manager
James Lawson, Assistant County Manager
Rick Moorefield, County Attorney
Amy Hall, Public Utilities Department
Sally Shutt, Communications Manager
Steve Smith, USDA Rural Development
Charles McGougan, Marziano and McGougan, P.A.
Candice H. White, Clerk to the Board
Kellie Beam, Deputy Clerk to the Board

ABSENT: Commissioner Marshall Faircloth, Vice Chairman
Commissioner Jimmy Keefe

Chairman Edge called the meeting to order and advised that Vice-Chairman Marshall Faircloth was out of town and therefore unable to attend. Chairman Edge introduced the commissioners in attendance and turned the meeting over to James Martin, County Manager.

Mr. Martin extended a welcome and stated the purpose of the meeting was to provide information about the proposed plan for the Gray's Creek Water and Sewer District so voters could make an informed decision. Mr. Martin stated the county will address contamination in the South Point subdivision but with the exception of that area, water for the rest of the district and whether the referendum will be authorized will be in the hands of district voters. Mr. Martin introduced county staff and then introduced Steve Smith representing the USDA Rural Development and Charles McGougan, engineer with Marziano and McGougan, P.A.

Mr. Martin provided the following information in the form of a PowerPoint presentation and asked that questions be held until the end of the presentation.

Gray's Creek Water and Sewer District
Water System Bond Referendum

On November 8, 2011 district voters will decide on a \$21 million bond referendum to fund a district water system.

Background:

- In 2009, Commissioners hired consulting engineers Marziano and McGougan to develop a county-wide master plan for the development of a county-wide water system.
- The Gray's Creek Water and Sewer District was formed in October 2009.
- The County Commissioners serve as the governing board.
- Providing safe water to the county residents remains a strategic goal for the county.

What is proposed for Gray's Creek water and sewer district?

- A water system to be constructed in five phases over approximately 15 years.
- Each phase to be constructed on a three-year schedule or as close to that as possible.
- The first phase (1A and 1B) will cost approximately \$6 million, to be funded over a 40-year period by loans obtained from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development.
- Estimated total project cost is \$26 million for all five phases.
- Voters will decide on November 8, 2011 whether to move forward or not.

What is the timeframe for Phase 1 and future phases?

- The entire process for Phase 1 is expected to take 18 months from design to construction completion.
- Each phase after that is projected to take three years from the completion of the prior phase.

Where is the water coming from?

- The district has an agreement to purchase bulk water from the Public Works Commission.

Who will handle the billing?

- This will be determined after the referendum.

Are we at risk of being annexed by the City of Fayetteville if a water system is constructed?

- Not as a result of the water system being constructed.
- The water system will be constructed to rural development standards, not municipal.
- Annexation depends on population density, not the availability of water.
- The state legislature approved an overhaul of North Carolina's annexation law this year. The measure allows citizens to block an involuntary annexation if 60 percent of property owners submit a petition opposing it.

Will the availability of water increase the tax value on my property?

- Perhaps, if the availability of water has affected the sales price of similar properties at the time of the next revaluation.
- Property values may decline, remain stable or increase.
- It depends on what the economy is like and how much demand there is for property in the area at the time of the next revaluation.

Will connection be mandatory for existing buildings?

- No.
- However, an availability fee will be charged to every property owner whose land abuts, or has direct access to a water line.

- For parcels without buildings, there will be only one availability charge.
- For parcels that have multiple buildings for which water is typically supplied, an availability charge will apply to each building.

Will connection be mandatory for new construction?

- Maybe, based on existing subdivision regulations.
- They require any subdivision creating 2 to 10 lots to connect to public water if it is within 300 feet; any subdivision creating 11 to 20 lots to connect to public water if within 500 feet; and any subdivision creating 21 or more lots, either in a Sewer Service Area or with a density of greater than two units per acre, regardless of the distance.
- The Planning Board has the authority to waive these requirements in hardship circumstances.

Will the county extend the system to take in new subdivisions or development?

- Rules, Regulations and Specifications will be established and the conditions under which extensions are made will be outlined.
- These will likely be at the developer's cost and in those circumstances that do not strain the capacity of the system as it is developed.

May an owner keep an existing well to use for irrigation or other non-household purposes?

- Yes.
- The county will require a licensed plumber to certify that there is no cross-connection to the public water.
- Wells may be used to water landscaping or livestock, wash cars and fill pools.

At this point in the presentation, Mr. Martin advised a recommendation will be presented to the Board of Commissioners at their October 3, 2011 meeting to allow a county plumbing inspector to certify that there is no cross-connection to the public water rather than requiring that a licensed plumber provide the certification.

Will the County run the line to my house?

- No. The County's responsibility stops at the NCDOT right of way line, typically 30 feet from the centerline of the road.

How much will it cost to run the line to my house?

- It depends on the distance and obstacles, such as tree roots, and directness of connection. Local plumbers are hesitant to provide quotes without visiting the property. Estimates may range from \$10 to \$12 per foot with a straight-shot path and no tree roots.
- The homeowner can "do it yourself" at a lesser cost.

Do we have to connect?

- No, but you will be charged a monthly availability fee if your property abuts or has direct access to a water line.

Can we buy a tap for future use and not use water now? How much will that cost each month?

- Yes, as long as the owner agrees to be responsible for marking the location of the tap and protecting it from damage.
- The owner will have to pay the one-time "dry tap" fee and then will be billed the monthly availability fee.

How much will the monthly water bills be?

- All parcel owners along roads where water lines are constructed will be charged a monthly availability fee currently estimated to be \$28.14.
- Water system users will have an additional monthly water usage charge.
- The monthly water bill for customers using 4,500 gallons of water per month is currently estimated to be \$42.73, which includes the availability charge.

Mr. Martin emphasized the amounts being presented throughout the presentation are based on current best estimates.

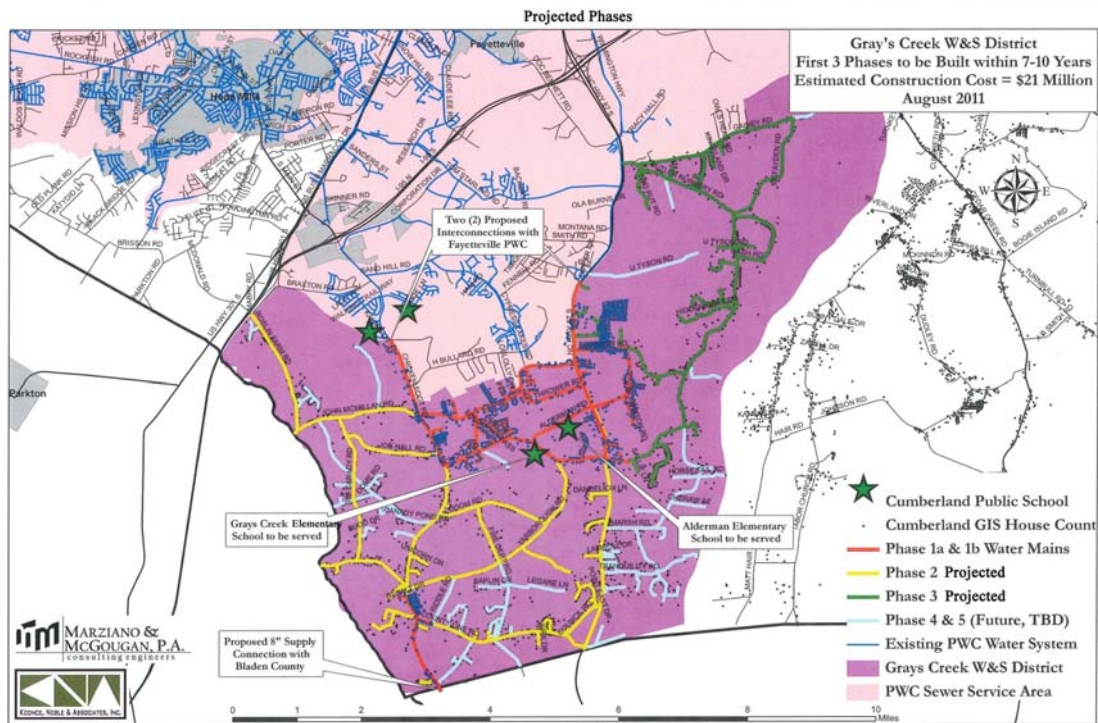
When will availability fees start being charged?

- Once water line construction is completed in a phase.

What will be the cost for each household or parcel owner in Phase 1A and 1B?

- The early “tap-on” fee is estimated to be \$350 prior to and during construction.
- After that, tap-on fees will range from approximately \$1,500 to \$2,000 depending on the size of the line and any unforeseen construction issues.
- Installation cost for a water line from main line to building.
- Plumbing inspection fee.
- Monthly Availability fee.
- Monthly Water Usage charge.

Estimated Recurring Costs	Estimated Cost
Monthly Availability Fee	\$28.14
Water usage charge for customers using 4,500 gallons of water per month	\$14.59
TOTAL monthly water bill for a customer using 4,500 gallons of water a month	\$42.73



Where can I learn more?

- Review the Water Use Ordinance for Gray's Creek Water and Sewer District available on the County's web site or pick up a copy from the Public Utilities Department in the Historic Courthouse at 130 Gillespie Street.
- Call the Public Utilities Department at 678-7637.
- A list of streets projected for each phase is on the website.
- Attend one of the following community meetings at 7 p.m.:
 Tuesday, Sept. 27, Gray's Creek Elementary School
 Thursday, Oct. 13, Gray's Creek Fire Department – Station 18, Fire Department Road
 Thursday, Oct. 27, Gray's Creek Elementary School

Mr. Martin concluded his presentation and opened the floor up to residents of the Grays's Creek community. The following questions and comments ensued:

- The county needs to work on the pricing, whether connecting or not. Costs have to come down and the costs should be changed before residents vote.
- Why should I pay \$28 for forty years if my water is good?
- What does the availability fee cover?
- Why was the date of November 8th chosen for the vote?
- Why is Phase 1A being done first if the concern is really to help the South Point subdivision? With Phase 1A being completed first, Phase 1A is basically going to pay for the project, and therefore it appears the concern is not about getting water to everyone in Gray's Creek, but getting it and paying for it quickly.

- Only one area has problems with well water being contaminated and Bladen County can satisfy that area's need for water; the project would then be smaller and less expensive.
- It was said that annexation is based on population density, not on water systems. If a water systems goes into place and shortly after that a sewer system also goes into place, wouldn't that lead to an increase in population density more so than an area with septic tanks and wells?
- If a county plumbing inspector will be able to certify that there is no cross-connection to the public water, will the county have to hire more inspectors?
- How can you charge residents in the area for water they don't want, don't need, and didn't ask for?
- Why is there an availability fee?
- I have a property in Brunswick County and they ran water to my property five years ago with no availability fee, only a tap fee. My water bill is \$11 a month. If Brunswick County can do it, then Cumberland County's numbers are out of sync.
- I signed a right-of-way agreement years ago with the state for a road. Can my property be used for running a water line without my signing a right-of-way to put a water line on it?
- When will Phase 3 begin paying an availability fee?
- What part of "no" do you not understand? We don't need this and we told you we don't want more development in the area than it can handle. We can not continue to afford to reach into our pockets for a developer who wants to build about one hundred houses on about thirty acres of land.
- Development in the John McMillan Road area has already gone crazy and the water table is so high, it won't perk; thus the need for a water line, thus the need for a sewer line.
- Will a \$28 fee be charged for a detached garage or a horse stable?
- I have one deed with 705 feet of property, almost one thousand feet from the road; how much is the county going to charge to run a water line, and will it be feasible to do so for 6 residences for only \$46 a month? I don't think so.
- If my property does not abut Thrower Road, am I going to be charged an accessibility fee?
- This project has been handled poorly from the start; the water/sewer district meeting was not posted properly, the PWC said in an open meeting that they can't guarantee a price, and the engineering report is not worth the paper it is printed on. All of this should have been opened up earlier on. I don't trust this project as far as I can see. The PWC sees us as a cash cow for the mess Mayor Pitts made in the western part of the county.

- Why are we paying money for a water line sized to run water across the river?
- Why not use COPs and only run water to the South Point community? Just run a water line to the South Point subdivision and we'll help pay; it will only cost pennies rather than \$28 a month.
- Why was water from Bladen Bluffs thrown out? This project is weighted towards the PWC.
- Why can't Golden Leaf money be used to run lines from Bladen Bluffs; has this been explored?
- I am not going to vote to buy water from Fayetteville.
- The annexation law has not been settled; I do not trust Fayetteville.
- There will be 60 psi running through the water lines of the older homes in the district; who will replace the water lines when they get blown out?
- If water is brought to the county, Fayetteville will annex it.
- How many parcels and residences are within the district?
- If one owns property with multiple deeds, is there going to be an availability fee for each parcel, whether you hook up or not?
- If you have a property that won't perk, why should one have to pay for water when nothing can be built on the property?
- Who will determine whether a lot is buildable?
- PWC said forty years ago they would run water; now PWC is running it at everyone else's expense.
- Who paid for the lines that run to the Food Lion and the high school?
- Why not raise taxes by a penny and let everyone pay; the county is going to make everyone want to move out of Gray's Creek, not move into it.
- Explain the difference in rural and municipal standards.
- I support this project because of a chemical coming from DuPont that's contaminating our well water.
- You are going to let people who will not pay the availability fee vote for me to pay the availability fee; is that right?
- Are we voting for a water system or for the funding?
- Even if we vote no, can the Board of Commissioners still approve it?

- I live in the Lawson Farm subdivision and we already have what we want through Robeson County. How will I be affected by this cost-wise and construction-wise? If I am not impacted, why is it fair for me to vote when I am not paying for the project?
- If Robeson County can provide water without charging an availability fee, why can Cumberland County not do the same thing?
- There are a lot of “may be’s” and “what if’s”. I am not going to vote on something that is a month away until all the issues are worked out.
- How did the county come up with \$28? I think the county would create a warmer reception for \$10 a month. PWC charges \$5.04 inside the city and \$8.04 outside the city; and you are talking about charging me five and one half times what PWC charges in the city, and three and one half times what PWC charges outside the city.
- I expected a presentation that would show a real need for the water system. I don’t see a need for water in this area. The plan as presented is expensive for local people. I have my own well and septic tank. You are infringing on my civil liberties and rights by charging me.
- Is the vote to be by registered voters or by actual property owners? What happens if someone is out of town? What percent of the vote is required to pass?
- What is the per foot cost for pipe?
- The area will continue to see development because it is one of the most desirable places in the county to live. You may have good water with good wells now, but are you going to have good water ten years from now? If Cumberland County had gotten public water in the 1970’s, we would not be talking about it today. Every county around us has public water. It is more expensive now than in the 1970’s and it will get even more expensive in the future. We need to look ahead because good water is going to be scarce and it will become a critical element in our society.
- If I choose not to hook up to the water system and I have problems with my well or pump, am I going to be allowed to repair my pump and sink another well?
- Will the \$28 for forty years be revisited once the debt is paid?
- Have you every seen a tax done away with?
- Why is there an increase in the connection fees overtime?
- If I live on a private road that is not maintained by the NC Department of Transportation, will I need to grant a right-of-way for the water lines to run across my property?
- Where is the water coming from? Is it recycled water?
- Where will we be voting; our regular voting place?

- I recommend sliding the vote to May 2012 with the primaries.
- It doesn't make sense to have the last community meeting on October 27th and have the vote on November 8th.
- Will every deed adjacent to a water line that has no dwellings carry an availability fee? Is the connection fee the same regardless of the side of the road?
- Residents pay for electric service to pump their well water; buying water could end up costing the same amount.
- Remember if you loose your electric power to pump your well, you also loose your water.

There being no further questions or comments, Mr. Martin turned the meeting over to Chairman Edge. Chairman Edge stated he learned a lot from listening to those who spoke and several good points were made. Chairman Edge also stated the purpose of the community meeting was not to pit one group against another, but to help Gray's Creek be a healthier community. Chairman Edge further stated there is more bad water in Gray's Creek than any other community identified at this time and the decision as to whether water will be run to the area rests with the property owners. Chairman Edge thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Approved with/without revision:

Respectfully submitted,

Candice H. White
Clerk to the Board