

# Town of Bluffton Town Council Workshop

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Sewer Connection Policy  
Workshop  
July 18, 2017  
6:00 p.m.



# Meeting Outline

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- Introduction
- Background
- Current Activities & Funding
- Analysis
- May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee (WAPAC) Recommendations
- Requested Guidance
- Next Steps



# Introduction

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- Town Council and the May River Watershed Action Plan Advisory Committee (WAPAC) have emphasized the need to eliminate septic tanks in the watershed.
- Eliminating septic tanks will reduce the potential for contamination of Bluffton's groundwater and surface water resources; preserve Bluffton's critically sensitive natural resources, including the May River & surrounding rivers and watersheds; and minimize the threat that failing septic systems pose to public health.



# Background

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## Town efforts

- Extended sanitary sewer in Buck Island-Simmonsville Roads and Jason Street Neighborhoods
  - Funding sources include CDBG, SWU, SCDHEC grants, BJWSA partnership
- Adopted Sewer Connection Ordinance on March 10, 2015
- Adopted May River Sewer Master Plan in October 2015
- Currently ~130 homes near Old Town not connected to available sewer
- Currently ~175 homes without available sewer



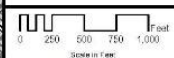
# BLUFFTON PARCELS PER SEWER CATEGORY IN TARGET AREA

Updated:  
July 16, 2017

### Legend

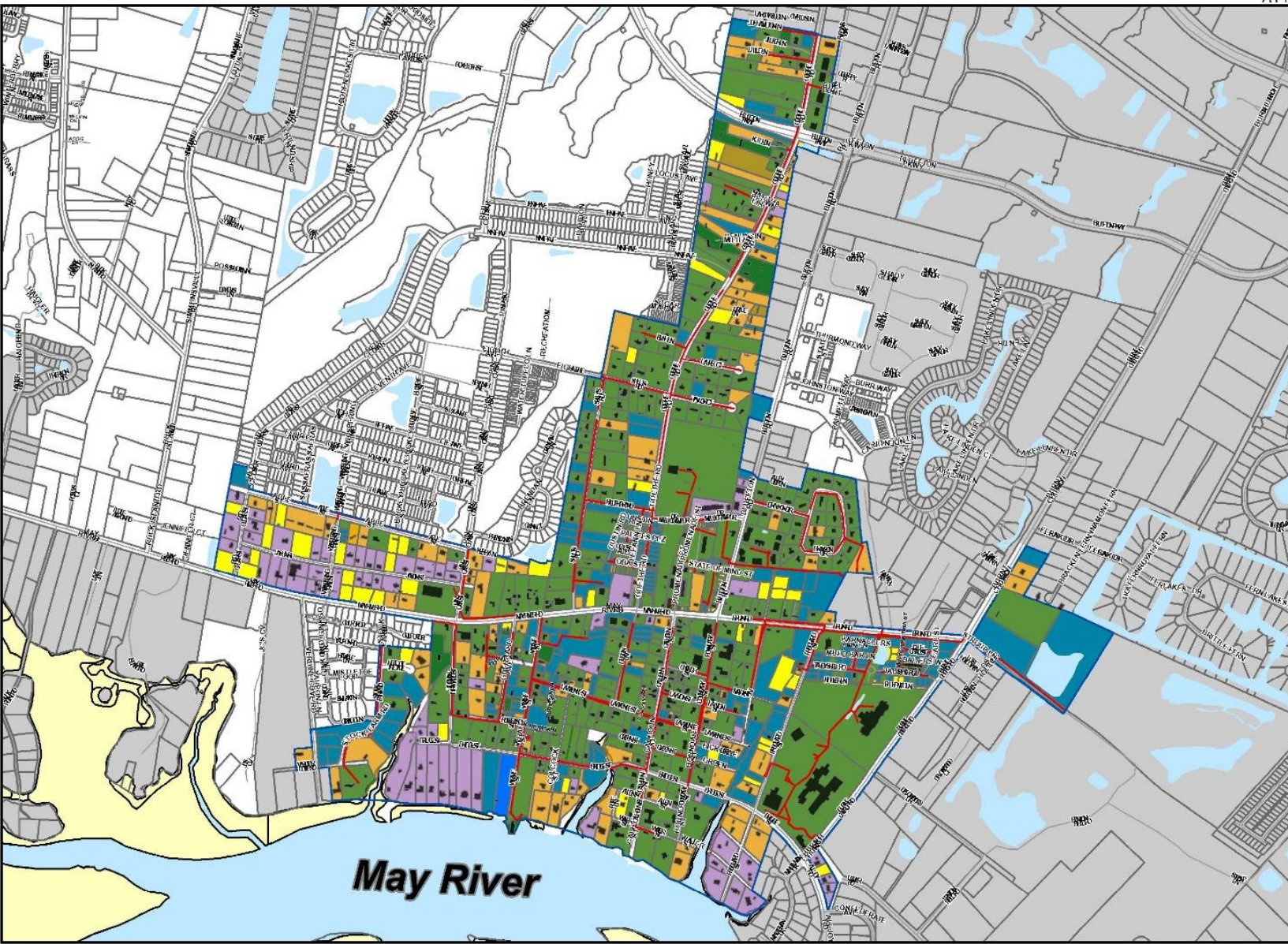
- SEWER CATEGORIES**
- 357 Occupied Parcel w/ Available Sewer
  - 130 Occupied Parcel w/ NO Sewer (Electricity Available)
  - 99 Occupied Parcel with NO Available Sewer (Electricity)
  - 227 Unoccupied Parcel with Available Sewer
  - 74 Unoccupied Parcel with NO Available Sewer (Electricity)
- EXISTING SS LINE
- ▭ BUILDING FOOTPRINT
- ▭ PARCEL LINE
- ▭ BLUFFTON
- ▭ BEAUFORT COUNTY
- ▭ STREETS

- UPDATES BASED ON:**
- 2014 B.JWSA BILLING DATA
  - AVAILABLE 2017 B.JWSA AS BUILT DATA
  - 2015 BC PARCEL DATA
  - AVAILABLE 2017 TOB BUILDING FOOTPRINT DATA



**DISCLAIMER**

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# May River



# Background

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## Town efforts *(continued)*

- Strategic Plan FY17-18 – Sewer Connection Policy a priority
- WAPAC adopted Sewer Connection Policy framework on September 22, 2016
- Upon WAPAC review of information at June 22, 2017 meeting, Committee seeks further Town Council guidance for the policy



# Current Activities & Funding

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## Town of Bluffton – Sanitary Sewer Extension

- Town Capital Improvement Program (CIP)
- Includes extension of the sanitary sewer main lines into unserved areas
  - Available Funding Sources
    - SWU
    - CDBG (LMI Qualifying)
    - Other grants or partnerships
- 5-year CIP priority list does not include additional sanitary sewer projects after Jason-Able Streets



# Current Activities & Funding

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## Town of Bluffton – Lateral Line Connection (\$40/ft - \$145/ft)

- Construction of private, lateral line connections to main line in association with CIP project, or by individual homeowner when not part of CIP project
  - Available Funding Sources
    - CDBG for income qualified homes as part of CIP
    - SCDHEC Appropriation regardless of income qualification
    - NAP for income qualified, homeowner connection
    - For individuals who qualify, Palmetto State Bank has offered construction loans (6.25 – 24.25%, 60 month term)





# Current Activities & Funding

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## Town of Bluffton – Capacity Fees

- BJWSA assessment to connect to sanitary sewer service. For a residence the capacity fee is \$2,760.
  - Available Funding Sources
    - As part of a CIP project, capacity fee credits are accrued by the Town and paid for each individual account connected to the new sanitary sewer line
    - Neighborhood Assistance Program offers assistance for income qualified individual homeowner
    - The Town can use Capacity Fee credits as an economic development incentive



# Current Activities & Funding

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## Beaufort-Jasper Water Sewer Authority (BJWSA) – Sanitary Sewer Extension

- BJWSA CIP
  - Partnership with Municipalities
  - Grants – State Rural Infrastructure and State Revolving Fund
- Front-Foot Assessment Projects
  - Private property owners can request an extension project via a petition. State Statutes authorize public service districts to install water & sewer lines and assess the cost of construction to those parcels of land directly abutting the lines over a period not to exceed twenty (20) years through an assessment added to their property taxes.



# Current Activities & Funding

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## Beaufort-Jasper Water Sewer Authority (BJWSA)

### – Lateral Line Connection

- BJWSA will install the main line and stub out water and/or sewer laterals to the front property line of each parcel
- If BJWSA installs a main line into a neighborhood, they will not finance the construction of the lateral line stub out connection to the home, meter set fees, capacity fees, or plumbing connection fees.



# Current Activities & Funding

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## Beaufort-Jasper Water Sewer Authority (BJWSA) – Capacity Fees

- If BJWSA installs a main line into a neighborhood, they will not finance the capacity fees.
- Thad Coleman fund offers assistance to families faced with financial hardship to connect to the system. It is funded through The United Way of the Lowcountry, BJWSA, Beaufort County, Beaufort-Jasper-Colleton-Hampton Comprehensive Health (BJCHCH) and BJWSA's participating customers.
- The Beaufort & Jasper DSS and BJCHCH administer the fund & determine financial eligibility for assistance.



# Analysis

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## Current Conditions in the Town

- Many low-income and fixed-income residents live in areas of the Town that would not qualify for CDBG funding
- These residents must rely on NAP assistance which may not be sufficient and creates a funding gap hardship
- Many of the most environmental sensitive areas are waterfront and would not qualify for CDBG program
- Individual connections are problematic due to cost, private property impacts, and unclear title to roads and rights-of-way



# Analysis

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## Local, Regional and National Programs

- Various programs exist across the nation to encourage connection to sanitary sewer including:
  - Voluntary, incentive-based
  - Regulatory, enforcement-based
  - Agency-driven, and
  - Hybrid approach
- The Town's current ordinance is primarily regulatory, enforcement-based
- Incentive programs nationwide can include rebate programs, loan programs, private sewer insurance, grant programs and municipal programs.



# Analysis

**TABLE 1. Examples of Sewer Connection Programs**

	Location	Program Description	Similarity to Town
1.	Hilton Head Island, SC	The Town directly funds the mainline extension program in unserved areas through a repayment agreement with the Hilton Head Public Service District #1 (mainline extension program). PSD #1 provides long-term/low-interest financing for private laterals. Partners with PSD #1 and nonprofit for grants to low-to-moderate income households for private laterals.	
2.	Beaufort County & Port Royal, SC	Apply CDBG funds for extension and connection. Accrue capacity fee credits with BJWSA.	✓
3.	Portland, Oregon	City loan program. Term of loan may vary. Simple interest rate (laterals).	
4.	San Luis Obispo, CA	City covers 50% of costs up to \$1,000 for owner-initiated repairs (laterals)	
5.	Vallejo, CA	Graduated reimbursement at dollar per square foot (lateral connection)	
6.	Brentwood, MO	City covers 100% of repair/replacement of private sewer laterals.	
7.	Clayton, MO	Owner may recover up to 100% of cost of repair to sewer laterals. Maximum rebate is \$4,000.00.	
8.	Pacific Grove, CA	City loan program. Up to \$10,000.00 at low interest rate.	
9.	Hamilton County, OH	City assessment. Offer an assessment assistance program that funds construction in excess of \$12,000 per benefited property from Metropolitan Sewer District. Also, property owners may, if they choose, pay the assessment (plus finance charges) over a 20-year period. Provides one-time grants up to \$6,500 to income eligible property owners. Only residents living in the county are eligible.	
10.	South Bend, Indiana	Per month fee to all residents for private sewer insurance program with low deductible.	
11.	Cape Coral, FL	“Contribution in aid of construction” deferrals for certain businesses and private properties. City pays, lien placed against property with repayment upon sale.	



# WAPAC Recommendations

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## Regional Coordination

- BJWSA partnership to prioritize funding for extension of sanitary sewer and lateral connection in Old Town as part of the Utility's CIP plan.
- Beaufort County partnership to actively implement the May River Watershed Sewer Master Plan to extend sanitary sewer and eliminate septic systems.





# WAPAC Recommendations

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## Town of Bluffton Strategic Planning

- Program sewer extension projects in Old Town into the 5-year projections of CIP, prioritizing areas closest to the river.
- Establish an annual septic system inspection program.
- Prioritize Ghost Road acquisition nearest to the river's edge.
- Increase the Town's Stormwater Utility Fee to support these efforts.



# WAPAC Recommendations

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## Sewer Connection Ordinance changes

- Allow for on-going hardship deferments in the case of Ghost Road complications.
- Clarify language requiring connection within 180 days of written notification.

## Sewer Connection Incentives

- To encourage private connections, adopt financial incentives tied to a clear public purpose supported by such incentives, e.g. capacity fees.



# WAPAC Recommendations

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## Septic System Inspection Program

- To protect the health, safety and welfare of the public and environment, establish an annual septic system inspection program to ensure proper functioning of septic systems within the watershed.

## Educational/Outreach Program

- Emphasize adequate Operations & Maintenance needs of a septic system



# Requested Guidance

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1. How should sewer extension projects be prioritized?
  - WAPAC recommends prioritize proximity to water's edge & results from Microbial Source Tracking with lack of available sewer
  - WAPAC recommends prioritize Town jurisdiction
  - *And/or* other factor(s)



# Requested Guidance

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2. How should the Town's BJWSA Capacity Fees be allocated?
  - WAPAC recommends Town capacity fee credits offered to all Town residents converting to sewer regardless of income
  - Single family only *or* multi-family
  - Commercial connections eligible
    - Partial cost off-set equal to residential assistance



# Requested Guidance

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3. Should the Town pay for private, lateral line connections? If so, based on what factors?
  - WAPAC recommends Town pays for Lateral line connections in conjunction with an extension project, as available funds stipulate
    - CDBG used for income qualified only
    - SCDHEC appropriation for all individuals regardless of income
    - Offer assistance for lateral line connections only for a limited time following a project or as funds last, dependent upon funding source
  - Lateral line connections outside of an extension project?
    - Neighborhood Assistance Program for income qualified or regardless of income
  - Include commercial operations, if funds allow?



# Next Steps

Town of Bluffton Sewer Connection Policy	Step Completed	Date Completed
Step 1. WAPAC review and possible recommendations to Town Council	✓	June 22, 2017
Step 2. Town Council Workshop on Sewer Connection Policy	✓	July 18, 2017
Step 3. WAPAC review of Sewer Connection Policy	✓	August 24, 2017
Step 4. Town Council adoption of Sewer Connection Policy	✓	September 6, 2017

