

# Derry residents get rundown on feasibility study for water/wastewater systems

[chestertelegraph.org/2020/01/29/derry-residents-get-rundown-on-feasibility-study-on-water-wastewater-systems/](https://www.chestertelegraph.org/2020/01/29/derry-residents-get-rundown-on-feasibility-study-on-water-wastewater-systems/)

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On Monday, Jan. 27, about 20 Londonderry residents gathered at the Twitchell Building for the first of three planned public meetings about a study to be conducted on the feasibility of creating town water and wastewater systems.

Planning Commission chair Sharon Crossman told the group, “Every time we get excited about one initiative or another — for economic development, for community development — we run right into the fact that there are problems with any increased development in our community ...” The Planning Commission is hoping to determine the need and plan for and promote sustainable development.

Crossman then introduced Christina Haskins, an engineer and a vice president of the Dufresne Group consulting engineers, which has been hired by the commission to study whether there is a need for a community wastewater system and, if so, to develop solutions.

The first step, Haskins said, is to identify the need. “At this point,” she said, “we don’t know that there is a need to construct” one or more wastewater systems.

She added that existing septic systems cannot be expanded due to setbacks and other limitations, which hinder economic development. Town businesses “can be frozen in time” if they cannot expand their wastewater systems, she said, and in the future, businesses will want to grow. Lack of adequate waste-water systems could also adversely affect property values and hamper property sales, she said.

Current law, Haskins said, mandates separation distances between a well and a septic system. Existing properties that do not meet these standards are grandfathered in until there is a change of use or ownership on the property. Updates to a septic system, Haskins said, can be triggered if a cafe wants additional seating or a homeowner wants to build an addition. More often than not, there is not enough land to upgrade the septic, according to testimony O’Keefe has given to the Londonderry Select Board.

Haskins said Water/Wasterwater Committee goals were established two weeks ago. For the north village, the goals are “to maintain existing businesses and plan for the possibility of high density



Christina Haskins of Dufresne Group explains the purpose of the study. All photos by Bruce Frauman

residential development.” For the south village, the goal is “to maintain existing businesses and to support commercial and residential growth.”

According to both Haskins and Town Administrator Shane O’Keefe, money is available to drill up to 34 water test wells, mostly for residential lands. Haskins said whoever allows water testing will receive a full report of the results, which will otherwise remain anonymous.

Haskins said the first phase of the study will be to gather and map data. The engineers will look at town records, survey land owners to determine water supply and disposal, and test for water quality. She called a 40 percent response rate “decent.”

Using population projections and the data gathered, the Dufresne Group will identify and develop several options if a need for waste water projects is identified. It will hold a second public meeting in late March or early April with a preliminary engineering report along with funding options. A third meeting, once a particular path has been determined, will be held, probably in October.

Haskins told resident Kelly Capen that most solutions involve multiple decentralized wastewater systems. There could be leech fields or mound systems. These would have to be approved by the community and some funding may come from the town and individuals. She added that there are many waste district management options.

Haskins said each wastewater system would likely be kept under 6,500 gallons per day to avoid a state requirement for two leech fields per system. A similar one in Marlboro, she said, serves about 16 properties. Haskins added that she would be looking for about 2 acres per system depending on the size of the system.

O’Keefe said the Dufresne study is being paid for by a \$32,000 grant from the Agency of Natural Resources. He said the grant would only have to be paid back if the town went forward with a major construction project, in which case it would be paid out of the bond.



Londonderry resident and Planning Commission chair Sharon Crossman tells those gathered of the problems of growth in the town.



Residents listen to the presentations.