

Open Work Session

Discussion on Water and Sewer Study with George, Miles and Buhr, LLC

January 19, 2021

Ms. Katherine McAllister, P.E., Vice President/Project Manager; and Mr. Peter Bozick, Jr., P.E., Executive Vice President of George, Miles and Buhr came before Council. Ms. McAllister said they want to quickly give another overview to refresh everybody's memory from the last time they presented. She said the study they are doing is the Wicomico County Water and Sewer Master Plan, which is a master plan to outline the approach to provide safe drinking water and clean wastewater discharge to all residents of Wicomico County. She said the overall goal for the study is to figure out how to best serve all County residents and to look at several aspects, including public health, protection of the environment, and the economic wellbeing of all citizens. She said there are three main focus areas they are going to outline, and the first one is the engineering side of it, which is the technical water and sewer infrastructure, and alternatives on how to provide that. She said the second thing they are going to look at is the governing agency programs for management of the infrastructure, so they will look at other examples throughout Maryland that have programs for managing infrastructure. She said the third thing is they will develop a financial management structure and model to install, operate, and maintain the infrastructure.

Ms. McAllister said she also wants to quickly go back to one of their discussions in October where they discussed their existing 2017 land use map, which was provided at that time. She said the importance of this map is that it really lets them focus on what the growth areas are for Wicomico County. She said, looking on the map, any area around Hebron, Pittsville, Willards, rural villages, Parsonsburg, or Whitehaven, Council will see they are in colored areas, and those are the growth areas. She clarified, those are the areas they are looking at to serve some type of central water and sewer system. She said something to keep in mind is that anything in white currently is not being considered a growth area, so it will stay with on-site septic and wells, and will be under the jurisdiction of the Health Department as it is now. She said there are larger lots out there, so the thought process for most of these areas is they have enough area to hopefully replace their septic system if it fails. She clarified, they are always going to have exceptions, obviously, but the goal for this study is really to focus on the growth areas.

Ms. McAllister said they did some density calculations based on the growth areas, and there are about 17,000 parcels right now that have existing structures on private septic and wells. She said, looking at these areas for growth, that actually comprises about 70 percent of that 17,000, so for about 12,000 of these existing parcels, there will be a plan to serve them via central water and sewer, so 70 percent will get served. She said the other 30 percent, which is about 5,000, are in the white areas, and not in any of the growth areas. She said another interesting thing is, if they take the 12,000 that are part of the study, about 80 percent of those are bordering municipal systems, which is about 9,500 of the existing parcels, so they are right up against one of the major municipalities that have a wastewater plant, either the City of Salisbury, Fruitland, Willards, or Pittsville. She said there are only about 2,500 parcels that are in rural villages and are not near any existing system that is already currently with a discharge program existing, so they are considering those 2,500 parcels to sort of be County sponsored areas. She clarified, they would not be negotiating or coordinating with a municipality, it would be County areas already and no defined municipal entity, and these are actually mainly rural villages.

Mr. Dodd said Ms. McAllister mentioned 12,000 in the transition area. He then asked if that is assuming they want to tie into municipal, to which Mr. Bozick responded, about 9,500 tie into existing municipals, and the 12,000 includes the rural villages as well. He said, of the 9,500, they are saying that, from a technological point of view and a pocketbook point of view, it looks like that is the best option. He said they are located in position to the cities that already have treatment systems, so what is left to be done is put pipes in the ground, and they would not have to build new treatment facilities, or those treatment facilities will get built within those municipalities in the normal course of things when it is time to renew.

Mr. McCain asked if they foresee the County participating in that, as he thinks Pittsville is pretty much at their limit, to which Mr. Bozick responded, they are at their limit. Mr. McCain said, to serve that area, they would obviously have to expand the existing system. He then asked if they are envisioning the County being the funding mechanism for them to expand, or would they go back to chasing grant dollars and State dollars, or all of the above, to which Mr. Bozick responded, all of the above, and he thinks the County would primarily take the lead in representing those citizens. Mr. McCain said the County would have to be the leader on it because they are the ones trying to provide the County residents with public services. Mr. Bozick said, when they get into management of the structure, whether they have an Urban Services Commission, or a separate water-waste department within the County Government, or whether they get into privatization, or whether they create another governmental branch within the County Government like a sanitary district type of entity, they would probably be in between the County Council in dealing with the municipal entities. He clarified, not the Council directly, but whatever branch.

Mr. Bozick said, when they come to the part of the study that gets into the types of management structures, what is coming into focus is, now that they know where they have these seven rural villages, if they were operating separate treatment systems in those seven villages, they would have seven treatment systems. He said four of them are rather small, and three of them are medium sized.

Mr. Dodd said Mr. Bozick brings up a good point about the County getting involved because for many years now he has been listening to citizens who say they live in the County because they do not want to pay double taxes, and they would prefer that the County get involved somehow, and he is listening to them. He said he is glad they are bringing this discussion up.

Ms. McAllister clarified, each project is going to be different. She said, the one in Willards is going to be different than the one in Sharptown, and she thinks every project will be different. She said there will be partnerships, and they will have to be flexible with what each municipality wants.

Mr. Bozick said they are thinking by and large that the County Council needs to have some sort of subset or subdivision under them to take the lead on this whose full responsibility would be to understand water and sewer, and manage it. He said, at the end of the day, these are enterprise funds, so whatever gets charged that pays the bill, it should be independent of property taxes. He said it is a utility just like phone, cable, electric, or gas, so it is just run and managed as a utility. He said everybody needs it, it is great for public health, and obviously they have to protect public health, they have to have a good environment, and protect the pocketbook. Mr. Dodd asked if it would be a user fee, and not like the County taxpayers would be paying for somebody's water and sewer, to which Mr. Bozick responded, it is all user fees. Ms. McAllister added, based on the expenses in that utility. Mr. Bozick said the County may

lend itself in terms of bonding with a general obligation bond on full faith and credit, including property, but they may also say all of these bonds are going to be revenue bonds, which means that gets back to only those customers, and the revenue they get from those customers pay back the bonds.

Mr. Dodd said at some point they have to get the State and Federal Government involved so they can find out if there are grants and whatever services are available. Mr. Bozick said there are grants and different programs, but they change from time to time, and they have different goals within those programs. He said there is the Chesapeake Bay Program, which has the Bay Restoration Fund where they are trying to get nutrients out of the Bay water, and that is where people pay \$60 per year per house, and that money goes back into building systems that reduce nutrients. He said the EPA has always had a State revolving loan fund for water and sewer systems, and that EPA federal money goes to the State, and the State doles that out, so they have another source of money that they can give under low-interest loans. He said part of that program is that they have a loan forgiveness component, so that acts as a grant, so that is another avenue where they can try to get money. He said then they have USDA, but that is rural development, so they are interested in rural areas as their main focus. He clarified, the City of Salisbury does not qualify for rural development funds, but the County does. He said they look at income quite closely, and depending on the property values and the median household incomes, that tells them how they qualify for certain percentages of grants.

Mr. Holloway said they have been over this time and time again, and he thanks them both for coming today. He then asked if they are all in agreement that the most damaged area right now that would probably benefit from having water and sewer is the 346 corridor just outside of Salisbury in what they call the Chesapeake Heights area, to which Mr. Bozick responded, instead of just saying they are in agreement that that area is number one, he would like to say that is in the highest priority category. Mr. Holloway said he knows they have houses there where they will not let them put in septic systems, but he is not hearing that about other areas of the County. He clarified, there may be, but he is not hearing about it. Mr. Bozick said, for those reasons, that would be one of the top areas. Mr. Holloway asked, if that is their top area, what is their next move to get there to try to do something for it? He said they have been meeting about this for several years now, and he sees that area highlighted, so where do they go from here in the short-term? He clarified, he knows it is not going to be fast, but they need to start somewhere, and they have been talking about this for a long time now, so he is just wondering. Mr. Bozick responded, they have talked with the County Executive's Office, and they are looking at putting in applications to the State of Maryland to get a feel from them to make an offer in terms of how much in grants the State could offer them. Mr. Holloway asked who is in charge of finding land to build on, if that is where they are headed, and if they are looking to build a plant, or are they looking to hook up to Salisbury, to which Mr. Bozick responded, that corridor is in the category where the best technical solution is to hook up to Salisbury for that location. He clarified, that is the best technical solution and ultimately the least costly solution. Mr. Holloway asked if that can be done without annexation, to which Mr. Bozick responded, that is not an engineering question, but he will say that, with what they went through last year with the Airport, they discovered that the City of Salisbury has a Charter, and the City's Charter dictates what happens when people want sewer. He clarified, when someone wants sewer, he thinks that is a City Charter provision, and it is not up to him. Mr. Holloway asked if the alternative to hooking up to Salisbury is going for a private system and acquiring land and building a plant, to which

Mr. Bozick responded, that would be more expensive, and they would have to figure how that would play out and whether it is affordable for the citizens in that regard.

Mr. Bozick said right now they have categorized the total amount of nitrogen load going into the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, and with these 12,000 septic systems that they think are eligible to be connected into municipal sewer systems, they are producing a load of over 120,000 pounds a year of nitrogen. He said, if they are all connected, they could reduce that by two-thirds, and they would only produce about a third of that load into the Bay system.

Mr. McCain said they probably need to start having the City of Salisbury be part of this conversation because they made a change not that long ago where, if anybody taps into their public water and sewer system, they have to do an annexation agreement, but this kind of changes things when they start talking about this kind of scale. He said they are going to have swathes of parts of the County that want water and sewer, but do not want to be part of the City, and they know that. He said, to successfully do these things, they have to have some version of an Urban Service Agreement, or a Sanitary Commission, etc., but, at the same time, a few years ago the City said they are going to get away from that, so they made a change to their Charter to not do that unless they are annexed, but the County is saying they need some type of Urban Service Agreement. He said right now the two primary ways to accomplish this are sort of in conflict with each other, so he thinks they need to start having some conversations on how they marry this without these ultimatums.

Mr. Dodd said he agrees they need to invite the City Council President and Vice President, and maybe someone else, and have a Work Session. Mr. McCain said then the City would hear what Mr. Bozick and Ms. McAllister are saying.

Ms. McAllister said something to keep in mind is that the City of Salisbury does not qualify for some of this funding, and the County could qualify, so if there is some type of partnership that can be made where the County is paying for some of the infrastructure, maybe the City would be more relaxed on the annexation. She said, if the City were to annex, technically, they have to provide the water and sewer.

Mr. Holloway said years ago when they talked to Tidewater and Maryland Environmental Services (MES) there was really no interest from them in going into an area that was already developed. He said they were only interested in going into a new development and setting their plan up there. He then asked if they think there is anything that has changed since then? He said technology changes, so maybe the service does not cost as much, or maybe it is more lucrative, so he was wondering if they have had any conversations with either one of those companies in the past two or three years, to which Mr. Bozick responded, no, but scale is important. He said they have to keep in mind that the idea of them coming in with new development is that growth pays for growth, so they do not have to worry about that burden for that. He clarified, if it is new development, the County is not paying for it because growth pays for growth. He said, with the existing hotspots or trouble areas, or the next Morris Mill situation where there is just some sort of environmental or public health issue, then the County gets dragged into it. He said, using Quantico for an example, if the County got the money to put the pipes in the ground, they could perhaps then go to MES, or put it out for private, and they could come in and put in a treatment and disposal system, and in that case, it would be 20,000 or 30,000 gallons.

Mr. Bozick said, in the rural systems there are four in that same range, and if the County was doing it, he could see four identical pre-engineered treatment systems in those locations, whether they want a private developer to do it, or whether the County wants to do it, but that technology is the preferred technology. He said, when they mention the east corridor, they need to have an understanding with the State to figure out if they have to find land, or can they get a pipe discharge because that changes the economics significantly. He said finding land is going to be problematic and more expensive than a stream discharge system, particularly in the lower elevation. He said there are a lot of areas that do not drain very well anyway, and there are a lot of areas where groundwater is coming up, and when they extend out 50 to 100 years, it is going to get worse, not better. He said their first choice from a technical point of view is getting the State to allow stream discharge. He said, again, they are putting 100,000 pounds in right now through septic systems, but if they put a stream discharge in through a treatment plant, it would only be 30,000 pounds. He said they need to keep in mind that this allows the population to double in the next 50 to 100 years because they have to allow for growth, so even if they double, they are only at two-thirds of what they are doing now, so they still have a net savings to the base system. He said, to him, that represents a win-win for the County, the State and the Bay.

Mr. Cannon said the purpose of the study is to determine a couple of things, and one is the need, so how much necessity there is to this and how bad the situation is, which is understandable. He said he thought also that, aside from looking at the aspect that a solution is to team up with the City and look at some type of Urban Service District, the City has been very adamant that they are not going to do it without annexation. He said maybe some discussions could change that, but he thought the purpose of the study was to see how Wicomico County could become more self-sufficient. He said, that being the case, if they are going to propose to put one plant in place, as Mr. Bozick said, it is all about scale, so that one plant probably cannot even go on line until it has at least 60 agreements of homeowners at one time who agree to hook up. He said his question is how they get over that hump of initiating this, and how they are going to do this. He said they had so much trouble with Fruitland just trying to hook up with the issues they had, so how is Wicomico County going to go to homeowners and say they are building a water management plant and they all need to hook up? Ms. McAllister responded, she thinks that is why they are saying there are different projects in different areas. She said the east corridor backs up right next to the City, and that is why they say that from a technical standpoint, but there are other areas, such as Whitehaven, for example. She explained, if they want to go into Whitehaven, that would be a County self-sufficient system because there is nobody else around them. She said they would put in a system, and the County would be able to govern that however they develop their governing entity to do that. Mr. Cannon asked, how do they get the people to hook up?

Mrs. Acle said she had a Town Hall in Whitehaven and they discussed this, so it is really helping the citizens understand how this is going to work. She said she thinks getting their buy-in is key, to which Mr. Cannon responded, he is asking how they do that.

Mr. Holloway said what could happen and has happened in some municipalities in Wicomico County in the past 20 years or more is that the federal government or environmental people from the State say they are going to put in a water system, or the people are going to have to move because they are not

going to let them put in wells or sceptics. He said that is how they get over the hump, unfortunately. He clarified, they make them do it, and he thinks that is what happened in a couple municipalities.

Ms. McAllister responded, she thinks a great example, which everyone is probably familiar with, is Morris Mill. She said they needed at least 50 percent to reject the idea, but it did not happen. She said the majority of people wanted it, so they basically just had to go house by house and deal with it person by person, but in the end, everybody ended up connected. She clarified, there was some resistance, but it was not showstopper resistance, it still went in.

Mr. Bozick said they get an area of interest and then, through the engineers helping, they come up with a boundary, and they think this is the appropriate boundary based on what they are hearing from the citizens. He said then they try to do some specific preliminary cost estimates, and those citizens get the benefit of that presentation. He said they tell them the service area, what system they are going to get, and tell them the advantages and the cost, and then generally they go to referendum.

Mr. Cannon said there are some standalone facilities right now, and he does not want to mention the name of the particular development, but their utility bills are astronomical. He said he is trying to see where the endgame is because he recognizes all the data, and all the needs, but he is talking more about the human element. He then asked, when are they going to come to a point where they walk into someone's house and tell them they are going to be spending \$300 a month now, and are they going to use the carrot approach as opposed to a stick approach saying they have to do this? He further asked, with grants and funding, is there some way to ease these people into it to assist them and help them in that transition, to which Mr. Bozick responded, yes, all of the above. He clarified, part of it is a carrot, part of it is a stick, part of it is scale, and part of it is the wealth of the community they are talking about. He said he is not too sure what areas Mr. Cannon is talking about, so he does not know the wealth of that community. He said what they are seeing is a degradation of the housing stock in areas that do not have good septic systems, particularly in areas that are older with smaller lots. He said it is going to be like the lesser of two evils – yes, they will have high bills, but they will improve the value of their property and their house, and it is re-sellable. He said they can make improvements, and if their neighbors do likewise, they could turn the whole area around. He said, if they are not willing to pay that money, which is going to be hard to swallow, they are going to see vacant houses down the street and the quality of the neighborhood goes down.

Mr. Cannon asked if there is a plan in the endgame for the time they finish, and will it include assistance to the County so they know how to apply what GMB is giving them to make it so it is a total package and they know exactly what they need to do, to which Mr. Bozick responded, no. He clarified, that is a preliminary engineering study, this is a master plan, which is a higher-level plan looking out 50 to 100 years. He said they are not building all of this in the next 5, 10, or 20 years; some of it is 5 years, some 30 years, and some of it is 50 years. Mr. Holloway said they have been spending 5 years just talking about it, to which Mr. Bozick responded, it does take time.

Ms. McAllister said that is where they go after grants. She explained, they could put a couple of projects into the State and get an idea. She said the east corridor is an example of a project where they would be working with a municipality, but they could put in a rural village and see what kind of grant money they

get. She said they might get a lot of money in one of them to then just get started, so eventually maybe they will have 2,500 customers. She said then they can put those user rates over all 2,500 customers, and would not be just hitting one small area with high rates.

Mr. Holloway said, in reference to Mr. Cannon's statement about working toward being independent from the City, he thought that was the gist of what they thought the County wanted, but maybe not because he keeps hearing about hooking up to the City, and he thought that they had always talked about becoming independent. He clarified, he understands the east corridor system because it is close enough to Salisbury, but he can also tell them that most of those folks probably will not want to be annexed into the City. He then asked if the study is going towards hooking up, or is it going both ways, to which Ms. McAllister responded, they are focusing on the City areas, but there is a whole County. She clarified, there is Pittsville, Willards, and areas around them even where they might be willing to partner in a different way than the City of Salisbury might be willing to partner, or the County can start developing their own systems. Mr. Holloway said that is what he is getting at. He then asked what they are studying; are they studying trying to hook up to Salisbury, or are they studying trying to put in their own system because he thought they had always talked about getting into the water and sewer business on their own. Mr. Bozick responded, they definitely are proposing getting into the water and sewer business, so they are definitely going in that direction.

Mr. McCain clarified, they are telling Council that the County can go into the water and sewer business, but it would obviously be much cheaper, efficient, and economical in just that one example of the area east of Salisbury near Old Ocean City Road to do some kind of partnership with the City of Salisbury. He said that is going to be much more efficient and cost effective, and can be done soon. He clarified, creating their own system could be done, but that is going to be a huge investment, and it is not going to help those people for the next five years, to which Mr. Holloway responded, he understands that, but the comments that have come from Council in the past were that they wanted to be independent from Salisbury and create their own water and sewer.

Mr. Holloway said he just wonders where this study is going, and if it is being studied in that corridor on what the two options are, if there are two options on the table, with one being to hook up to Salisbury. He then asked what the other option is, and has movement been made to find land? Has anything been achieved to find out what it is going to cost? He asked if that has been done, to which Mr. Bozick responded, for the eastside corridor, that has all been done. He said they did a feasibility study, and they tried to price out looking at land, and, out of necessity, as he recalls, it was something along the lines of having to draw a radius of about five miles to the east outside of the Bypass where they think they could get land. He said they need so many acres, and they need a certain amount of pipeline they would need to get from point A to point B, and they gave Council some cost estimates for that. He clarified, Council has those capital cost estimates.

Mr. Dodd asked, with that particular study, how much input did GMB have from the citizens in that area, to which Mr. Bozick responded, they did not have any. He clarified, that was not part of their study.

Mr. Bozick said the interesting thing about this study is that getting the County into the water and sewer business is very desirable, and it is going in that direction for sure, and it is going to be a necessity in

these rural village areas. He said, in the areas that are close to existing infrastructure, which way the County goes is going to get down to a savvy economic decision. He said they were to advise the County on what is in the County's best interest when people have sewer problems, and what solution they want to bring to them, and honestly, they hear that people would rather not go into the City. Mr. Dodd said he hears that a lot, and he knows Mr. Holloway does. Mr. Bozick clarified, he also hears people say they have a failing septic system and they just want the County to help them out, and if they have to go to the City, they are going to the City. He said they have not really done the public outreach, and it specifically did not put in this report for GMB to do stakeholder meetings. He said sometimes in master planning they select people where every quarter they meet as a group with people who have various interests and keep them apprised of it. He said he does not want the County Council to have the whole report before they do public presentations, stakeholder meetings, and workshops, but, at the end of the day, if they want to go with a County system, that is up to the County Council. Mr. Dodd said at some point they need to have public input because the Council cannot make decisions for them.

Mr. Bozick said they discussed this in detail with Mr. Psota recently because he is coming into the game new, and Mr. Psota wants to honor what the spirit was when this contract was done, and Mr. Psota can put it quite eloquently in terms of how he phrases it. He said he has always put it in terms of the County wanting the answer to the question of how they address problems when they come up, and what their course of action is, and GMB is going to give the County the best technical, financial, and managerial. He clarified, politically it may not be the prettiest, or what the Council would like it to be politically, but Council can make that decision, and that is what their role is, and they do not want to sway Council politically one way or the other. He said their expertise is on the technical, financial, and managerial.

Mr. Bozick said, taking the eastside corridor, if they start putting a sewer on Old Ocean City Road, they are going to end up running across Beaglin Park Drive, or the northeast collector, and they are going to have a road that has County sewer going one way, and City sewer going another way, and they will have two sewer lines and two water lines in different directions. He said how many times would somebody be called out there to work on those streets, and how expensive would it be to work around existing utilities that are already there. He said they try to learn from experiences they have seen from others, and Sussex County is a good example of that because they intermixed County systems with two private companies, and they actually worked out arrangements to try to minimize and eliminate having two separate wastewater companies running their lines down the same street.

Mr. Holloway asked, when they were doing the feasibility study for the eastside corridor, did they look at the railroad as far as running the water and sewer down that rather than running it down the street, to which Mr. Bozick responded, a little bit. Mr. Holloway asked if that worked out, to which Mr. Bozick responded, it is tough to get railroad right of ways, and there is no guarantee they are going to get it. He said they also looked at where the abandoned railroad was on one side of Old Ocean City Road. He said he thinks a lot of that property has already been turned back over to property owners, but it is still an open possibility where that may be the best approach.

Mr. Bozick said, when it comes to rates, many people pay \$100 a month for phone bills or Comcast, or even \$200 or \$300 a month, so people are paying these types of fees already for certain things they feel are utility private enterprise. He said they need to decide if private enterprise is the best way to give the

people the lowest rates. He said, generally, people do not feel like government itself in a general sense can do something that is as utilitarian as providing a utility structure, but he does not happen to agree with that. He said he thinks, with the right management structure, governments who do not have the profit incentive can run a very efficient water and wastewater as a utility. Mr. Holloway said it can be private enterprise all it wants to be, but if it quits working, then the County gets blamed for it.

Mrs. Acle asked if that is how Easton Utilities works, to which Mr. Bozick responded, he thinks that is an interesting example that he wants to flush out some more. He said they have a utility structure that is more of a corporate private enterprise type of structure with a Board of Directors, a Chief Executive Officer, and a Chief Financial Officer, and he thinks they own and manage not only water and sewer, but also electric, and he believes now internet.

Mr. Dodd asked if they have any recommendations for some type of exploratory committee on this because that is not what GMB was tasked to do, to which Mr. Bozick responded, they will when they get their final report. Mr. Dodd clarified, he is asking if they have any suggestions on some type of exploratory committee, to which Mr. Bozick responded, he can try to work on that, but it starts with a representative from each of the municipalities and rural villages, and it starts with people who are both in favor and opposed. Mr. Dodd said it is important to make sure they have the citizens who are affected be a part of it because they are the ones who have to pay the bills at the end of the month.

Mr. Cannon said Mr. Bozick mentioned that in the long run it would be the Council's decision to get this moving. He then asked what would be a five-step process that he would suggest for Council to follow to make sure they implement it properly? He said they know there is an east corridor, they know it is a need, they have seen it, they are aware of it, so what would be the first steps Council would need to take to make it come to fruition in general terms, because they are going to have to make that decision sooner or later, and they are going to have to know where to start.

Mr. Taylor said he has a general suggestion. He said they might want to look at some other Counties that have gone through this. He said he knows Queen Anne's County has recently, but Mr. Bozick probably knows of others, and they could try to make it as comparable as possible. He said he thinks they are going to find that the route to take is to have a Sanitary Commission probably sooner rather than later. He said, if he is not mistaken, he thinks most of these lending agencies prefer to deal with a separate Commission rather than the Legislative Body for various reasons, so he thinks it might be wise to do that. He said Queen Anne's County has been very successful running down the southern portion of Kent Island in what is a pretty well recognized and very good program. He said they had the issue of getting people to hook on, but some news articles he saw indicate that they showed people that the value of their homes would go up, so it is not like they are getting screwed. He said they force them to hook into the system, and he thinks they are going to find that is a necessity, but that is one way they did it. He said they had an appraisal made of how this would affect typical homes along that stretch of Kent Island and that, basically, sold it. He said there is one interesting aspect he found when reading about this, which is that there is a cost in addition to putting in the lines in the public street. He said the lines coming out from the homes is a separate problem because, typically, septic lines run out to the side or rear, and they are going to have to put lines in on each piece of property out to the mains, and he does not know whether they can get public funding for that or not, but that was part of the assessment that

they made these folks pay for. He clarified, they gave them time to do it. He said he thinks they could learn a lot if they look at some other Counties, and that would be a good one, but there may be others.

Mr. Cannon said, in 2019 Mr. Hastings gave Council a breakdown and supplied everyone with documents on just Queen Anne's County and Kent Island. Mr. Taylor said he has not seen that.

Mr. Cannon asked, again, do they have an idea on steps Council needs to take, to which Mr. Bozick responded, the technological approach for where they are in Wicomico County is probably best suited for the Tyaskin-Bivalve-Nanticoke area in terms of modeling where they would have something similar to that. He said, interestingly enough, and honestly enough, in their search for grant money they included money to connect the homeowners on private property, and they got pushback from the federal agencies, but they ultimately prevailed because that was part of the budgeting and funding for Morris Mill. He said, generally, there was an allocation of \$1,500 per household to do the work on the private property to get the water or sewer from the private property into the public right of way. He said it is a very challenging and difficult process, and he thinks it is not uniformly done that way. He said there are cases in extreme poverty areas where they can get exceptions, or in the past they have had some third-party banking programs that helped support that effort.


Mr. Bozick said they are going to keep pursuing this project, and they are going to the next step with the data they have. He said they have enough data now that they are going to reach out to the State for areas like the eastside corridor, and areas like Whitehaven and Mardela, and then see where they stand. He said they know it takes multiple years to do this, but they can get a sense from the State on whether they agree with what they think is a high priority or hotspot, and are willing to fund it. He said, at the same time, they are going to give the State the big picture, which he thinks will enhance the County's position. He said, if favorable grant money comes through in one of those three areas, they feel like the County can probably implement and pursue those projects without tying their hands behind their back on where they go in the future as far as setting up a sanitary district or privatization, so they are not shutting the door on other options that would be more desirable for the County on a grander scale.

Ms. McAllister said the goal is to have a draft report sometime around spring, and that will hopefully answer a lot of the questions on what financials they are talking about, and what management options they have, and then they can start implementing, but they will have those answers first.

Mr. Dodd asked, when Ms. McAllister says spring, does she mean May or April, to which Mr. Bozick responded, May or June. Mr. Dodd asked if they want to give an update before that, or should they wait, to which Mr. Bozick responded, he will check with Mr. Psota. He said Mr. Psota might feel like they have something they want to share, and they should know by mid-May and get a preliminary read from the State. He said the State will come out with a draft list of where they rank projects for funding. Ms. McAllister said, if they submit two or three projects, they will see where they land on that list.

Mr. Taylor asked if Mr. Bozick thinks it would be wise to start exploring a Sanitary Commission during that period of time so they essentially have it prepackaged and ready to go if and when it is needed, to which Mr. Bozick responded, in the report they will explain the options and try to define what those options are. He said they will have a matrix table that lists the four options on governance, and list the

pros and cons, and what the advantages and disadvantages are, and then have the County Council holistically decide what they think is best for the County. There was no further discussion.



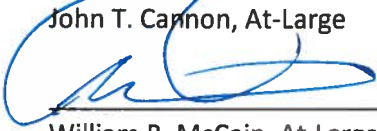
Larry W. Dodd, President, District 3



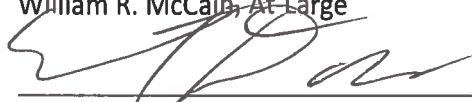
Joe Holloway, Vice President, District 5



John T. Cannon, At-Large



William R. McCain, At-Large



Ernie Davis, District 1



Nicole Acle, District 2



Josh Hastings, District 4



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator