

Sands Point Report

DECEMBER 2019

MAYOR ADLER'S REPORT

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INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:

Latest Water Supply Challenges	1-3
Other Brief Updates	3

Long Island's Latest Water Supply Challenges

Residents throughout Long Island, particularly here on the Port Washington peninsula, have found some recent articles in the press disconcerting, if not alarming: the discovery of new and unfamiliar water contaminants, plans for expensive capital investment for treatment processes, and water usage restrictions, including limitations on new water hook-ups.

To better understand how these new issues of universal concern will impact Sands Point, our Water Superintendent Brian Gunderson, Water Commissioner Dan Scheyer, Dep. Water Commissioner Rick Sirow, Clerk Liz Gaynor and I met last month with Phil Sachs, P.E., of the engineering firm D&B, the consultants for the Village and many other water departments throughout the metropolitan area. Here's a summary of what we learned.

The "New" Contaminants of Greatest Concern

Historically, testing has not been required and no standards have been established for two different types of contaminants: **1,4-dioxane** and **PFAS** (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances). 1,4-dioxane is a solvent and chemical stabilizer and is most likely to be found in water supplies affected by contamination from the manufacture or use of certain industrial products. PFAS are related to DuPont Teflon, are pervasive in our households, and are found in products as diverse as tooth paste and even certain fabrics; they turn up in our water in minute but detectable quantities.

Planning for the worst case seems to be the most prudent approach for dealing with these new contaminant risks, but it is fraught with uncertainty. The following are the primary logistical and budgetary challenges facing water departments attempting to plan for dealing with these contaminants:

- There is little scientific basis yet available for determining the maximum allowable level of these contaminants (MCL) for water to be deemed safe to drink. As a result, to date only three states have actually set MCL levels for these substances, but several other states, including New York, are in the process of developing MCL values. The quandary for regulators is that if the MCL is set too low, wells will be removed from service or require expensive remediation unnecessarily; if set too high, there are potential health risks.

Continued on page 2

- Testing for these contaminants is many times more expensive than normal contaminant testing and may have to be done frequently, given the apparent difficulty in getting consistent readings at levels so close to modern detection limits, particularly for PFAS. Our budget for water testing in Sands Point will likely double to incorporate regular PFAS testing in our program.
- Treatment processes for PFAS are expensive but proven effective using an established activated carbon filtration process; treatment processes for 1,4-dioxane are largely unproven and likely even more expensive.
- Construction of treatment facilities will require engineering design work and a regulatory approval procedures of uncertain length. A further complication is a waiting list of as much as a couple of years to obtain specialized equipment, such as the activated carbon filtration canisters needed for PFAS treatment. For that reason, the Village Board has authorized the purchase of such equipment to position the Village for equipment availability if and when our water department is required to implement treatment.

In Sands Point, where our water department has six operating wells, we appear to be fortunate so far with respect to 1,4-dioxane levels. Tests indicate that our wells are substantially below New York State's proposed, but not yet adopted, standards for this contaminant. This is not a surprising result, given that the aquifer from which our six wells draw is somewhat isolated from the aquifer from which mid-Island wells draw. Less fortunate is the situation faced by Port Washington Water Department; several of their wells show higher levels of 1,4-dioxane that may exceed the proposed new MCL, perhaps because those wells are closer to industrial areas where the substance may have leached into the groundwater and aquifer.

The first tests Sands Point has performed for PFAS are more worrisome. Federal advisory standards for PFAS are 70 ng/L but the proposed NYS MCL is 10 ng/L.* Initial testing in recent months show levels in Village wells as high as 7 ng/L, only one-tenth the level of the Federal advisory standards but close enough to New York's proposed MCL to suggest planning for remediation as a prudent course. We are re-testing all wells to see if levels remain consistent over time, and, as mentioned earlier, we are laying the groundwork for the design and construction of active carbon treatment facilities should they prove necessary for one or more of the Sands Point wells.

Some Questions and Answers

How will the construction of remediation facilities be funded? There's hope lawsuits against manufacturers or industrial users of products that are the likely sources of these contaminants might yield compensation for impacted water departments. Grant funds might also be made available. Of course, the fall back is funding through bonds, just as our and other water departments do regularly for normal infrastructure construction.

Do problems with Port Washington Water Department wells affect us in Sands Point? Directly, no, because the connection between our water systems is used only under emergencies or special circumstances; for example, recently when PWWD replaced a water tower, the interconnection was opened so that the pressure from our Village's nearby tower assisted the PWWD until their new water tower was in service. During the drought a few years ago, the interconnect was used so that Sands Point could buy additional water from PWWD to maintain full capacity for irrigation. Our water department at my request entered into a three-way agreement with PWWD and Manhasset Lakeville, so that the existing interconnects would allow for the option of purchasing water from Manhasset Lakeville in addition to PWWD. Wells in any jurisdiction that do not meet NYS standards will be required to cease operation until remediation facilities are in place.

Continued on page 3

*ng/L stands for parts per trillion, unlike most MCLs which are measured in parts per billion (ug/L)

What happens if one or more wells must be taken out of service temporarily because of a high contaminant level? There would be no impact on our year-round supply of water for normal household uses, but at peak capacity periods of dry weather in summer months, irrigation may need to be curtailed unless a backup well is available. Three years ago we started the lengthy application process to enable the construction of a 7th well on the Village Club property off of Astor Lane to back up our other wells to avoid summer irrigation restrictions if one or more wells were out of service. Permission from the State Department of Environmental Conservation for a test well was received earlier this year, and that work will be underway in the coming months. It is still a long road to completion of construction of a permanent 7th well, but at least the process is moving forward. Needless to say, the contaminant level of the new test well will be monitored before committing to build a permanent well in that location.

In summary, there are too many unknowns at this point to know if we have a problem and whether remediation steps will need to be taken. As we have more specific and dependable information, we will of course pass it on to our residents.

Other Brief Updates:

- The Village's multi-year **sanitation and snow-plow contracts** are up in May. Bids are due soon for new contracts; we are anxious to know how the new contracts will impact our budget planning for 2021 and beyond.
- The **Harriman Drive** road project has been completed.
- On December 10th, **Sands Point Police officers James Nolan and Jonathan Jonke** received commendations from the Nassau County Police Conference for their heroic response in October 2018 which saved a small child's life, not breathing and unresponsive in mother's arms upon their arrival, by successfully performing CPR. The officers received the SPPD's Life Saving award last year. Chief Ruehle congratulated them and noted their actions as "yet another example of the highest level of professionalism, dedication and training that all members of the Department exhibit."
- While there's cautious optimism throughout the region that the arrests last week in Saddle Rock may have broken the burglary ring believed responsible for four **Sands Point burglaries** and dozens of others throughout the County and elsewhere, I wish to reiterate the messages from Chief Tom Ruehle and Deputy Mayor Peter Forman reminding us all to set alarms even for short periods away from home, to never leave keys in an unlocked car in the driveway, and to inform the SPPD of vacation plans for extra security checks. Without being able to go into further details, I was pleased to learn that our Department played an important role in the investigations leading to the arrests.
- **The Village Club** concluded its successful 25th season with significant membership growth in 2019. From end-of-season 2018 to end-of-season 2019, golf memberships rose from 261 to 304, and total memberships all categories rose from 757 to 822. The need for capital expenditures continues to present challenges, but the stronger membership base is encouraging, and thanks are due to the Club staff and Operations Committee volunteers for their accomplishments this year.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the Village staff, our best wishes for happy, healthy and safe holidays and a great start to the next decade and the Village's 110th year!



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DECEMBER 2019 REPORT

SEASON'S GREETINGS
&
BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY & HEALTHY 2020



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