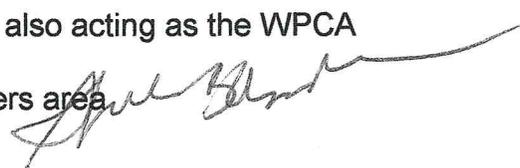


Sheila B. Amdur

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TO: Members of the Mansfield Town Council, also acting as the WPCA
FROM: Sheila B. Amdur
RE: Sanitary sewer system for the Four Corners area
DATE: September 2, 2014



I was not able to attend any of the public meetings held by the WPCA/Town Council regarding the proposed sanitary sewer system for the Four Corners. I wanted to express my strong support for this project and urge the Council to approve the resolution to take this to the voters in November.

I was an elected member of one of the Town Council shortly after it was formed, and was on the Council when the expansion of sewers was brought to the voters in the early 1970's. I was a strong proponent of including in that proposition the expansion of sanitary sewers to the Four Corners. There were already environmental issues, given the poor soils and high water tables in that area, and the Four Corners has always been a draw for business, given its accessibility and its location as a junction of two main roads in our region. Unfortunately, we did not take that action and the Town has been dealing with environmental problems in the Four Corners since then.

The Four Corners is also a gateway to our town, and one that does not present Mansfield very well. With the addition of sewers and public water systems to this area, we will realize economic benefits and a revitalization of the area. I believe that it is astute and on-target planning to address major environmental issues, as well as economic development that is focused on a compact area, preventing sprawl and growing environmental problems.

I first moved to Mansfield in 1970, raised my family here, and left in 2002 to live in West Hartford. However, I missed my community, and returned in 2012. I have been very impressed with the changes in the Town since that time--a thriving Storrs downtown, an extraordinary community center, and a renewed vibrancy in the Town. I commend all of you who have helped our town to prosper.

Dear Fellow Council Members:

First, understand, a vote to Authorize the Project does just that; it says: this Project goes forward. Management needs only to find the money. A vote to Authorize the Project is not dependent in any way upon the Referendum vote. ~~There can be an overwhelming NO vote and management will still be authorized to go find the money. Past experience proves that management is adept at finding large sums of money with no requirement for the taxpayer's vote. Remember the Downtown. This council lost the taxpayer's trust on that project. Don't do it again.~~

There is no cost/benefit analysis of this Project, expected to be about \$11 million, excepting for an analysis, not provided to us for review, which predicts a possible \$255,000 tax return ten years from now. That's like saying: Give me \$1100 today, trust me, and maybe I'll give you \$25 ten years from now – Boy have I got a deal for you! In fact, based on a cost of \$9 million, the cost per property is over \$150,000; that is unjustified. Please add \$2 million in interest and other cost and, what about preparing for inflation and construction cost overruns. This is an extraordinary cost per property.

The cost allocation of this Project amongst the beneficiaries and the town taxpayers is arbitrary. This cost allocation was never discussed in open session either at Council or at the Four Corners Water & Sewer Committee. One night, the former Director of Public Works arrived at a meeting of the Four Corners Water & Sewer Committee and announced that this is what will happen. I was there. The taxpayer is subsidizing the beneficiary/developer. Is this allocation of cost another "back room" decision? Again, this erodes the public's trust.

The resolutions to be voted on tonight do not guarantee the cost allocation as presented. A YES vote to Authorization the Project subsequently allows the WPCA to expand the Project, possibly to decrease the Project and, possibly to charge the entire Project cost to the taxpayers or, to the residential homeowners in the Sewer District. I can hear councilors saying: we wouldn't do that. The public is saying: we have reason not to trust you. The cost allocation should be discussed in public session and should be made part of the resolutions.

The resolutions to be voted on tonight do not provide for the possibility that the \$3 million Public Act money may not be funded by the State Bond Commission. That is a possibility; these resolutions should provide for that possibility.

A serious flaw in this process is that possible additional sources of funding have not been explored.

Other sewer projects I've researched have applied for grants to:

- A. The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Clean Water fund.
- B. The United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development program.
- C. Special federal grants.

All possible funding sources should be explored before this council authorizes this Project.

Another cost relates to the sewer agreement with Uconn. This town needs to know its cost and, people in the Sewer District need to know how much they will pay for sewer usage. Especially the Jensen's residents need to know this. The Agreement for sewer use with Uconn should be in place before any vote is taken on this Project. Here comes trust again; we need to have the agreement with Uconn accomplished.

Now, at the informational sessions no credible data was presented to show contamination due to sewerage in the Four Corners area:

1. There is no abatement order to the town from DEEP
2. There is no specific, current septic failure data. In fact, it was noted that the gas station currently under new construction had a septic failure and now has a permit for a new septic.
3. There is no ground water contamination from septic failure. If such existed, surely the town and Deep would require connection to the sewers and that is not the case.

Conclusion: contamination is not a reason for the sewers; the Project is simply to promote development.

Mansfield Tomorrow surveyed many community members. The participants voiced one common cause; they advocated for preservation of Mansfield's rural character. The public was told that the town's new Plan of Conservation and Development and new zoning regulations would guarantee that. By voting YES to authorize this sewer Project, this council is providing for possible major development without having the PoCD and zoning regulations in place. Has council and/or town management been honest with the public? Again, this is an issue of trust in government.

Development in the expanded Sewer District, as now presented, certainly will impact both the environment and the rural ambiance of Mansfield. Mansfield citizens must rely on their elected officials for protection of their environment. Development in this expanded Sewer District undoubtedly will impact the Cedar Swamp. It will create traffic with the attendant pollution. Citizens have asked for an environmental impact study. That should be done before any vote to authorize this Project.

This town's zoning regulations are outdated. Even just a few years ago we, the general public, didn't have the information we now have regarding the impact of global climate change to New England. New England may be subject to severe storms which we're not used to. Climate change and the possible impact to the Four Corners area should be considered. Four Corners is a low, high water table area. Yes, it was an economic center from years ago but the population density was dramatically different and there was not the development that seems to be planned. Perhaps Four Corners is not the place for major development now. Current scientific data should be a consideration in planned development. Zoning regulations need to be in place to allow for controlled development of the area.

Having attended all but one informational session and having spoken with many other residents, it is my responsibility to vote based on what I hear from the public. Accordingly, I will vote NO.

I humbly ask my fellow council members to recognize the serious issues with this Project. Longstanding and knowledgeable members of this community have come to point them out to us. This Project needs further scrutiny. Please vote NO to the Authorization of this Project. Thank you.

Betty Wassmundt
Town Council