

Special Town Meeting about a New Water System for Jamaica Village October 15, 2019

FAQ's

What is the current issue?

The village of Jamaica's water needs are currently served by private wells for residences and businesses. Due to Vermont state regulations requiring 100ft between septic and public water systems (wells) the construction of any new well or septic is nearly impossible in the densely populated village.

This inability to install new water/septic systems limits any new economic development that would require getting a public water permit. This would include bars, restaurants, and food processing businesses like bakeries. Also if existing businesses want to expand they are limited to their current permitting based on 2007 capacity.

By installing a public water system in Jamaica village it would allow existing businesses to have more flexibility in which to grow and would perhaps attract new businesses town. The new system would only effect residents and businesses in Jamaica Village and would not be available to residents outside the determined area where the system is built.

What is the scope of the project?

At this time there is no timeline to have the project completed. The Select Board continues to move the project forward at the will of the town. The eventual goal would be to have a water system installed in the Village of Jamaica.

There have been a number of studies done regarding the water in Jamaica. This project was started in 2016 and began with a survey of town residents and an assessment of the current septic/water systems within the village by the Dufresne Group. This report is available on the town web site.

<http://www.jamaicavermont.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/WaterReport2018.pdf>

From this report the town requested bids through an RPF for Phase I and II of the project. Approving the funding for the recommended bid is what we will be voting on at the special town meeting. VHB was selected as the vendor to complete these phases, if funding is approved. The VHB proposal can also be found on the town website.

http://www.jamaicavermont.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/VHB_Web.pdf

Phases of the Jamaica Village Water System:

Phase I: Having VHB perform a hydrological survey to locate a water source in the town of Jamaica. It is currently unknown where this location would be and may require the town to purchase the land or obtain right-of-way permission. (Part of current vote)

Phase II: Drilling up to three test well on the site specified in Phase I to determine the quality and quantity of the water at the site. If quality water is found at an adequate volume the town may not need to drill all three wells thus saving taxpayer money. (Part of current vote)

Phase III: Engineering and design of water delivery system. The design is dependent on the location where the water is located and the distance from the village. It would also need to be determined what buildings would be included in on the new water system. (Not part of current vote)

Phase IV: The construction of the new water system that will be based off of the design from Phase III. (Not part of current vote)

How will the project be funded? What will this do to my taxes?

There are many funding options available from the state such as grants and 0% loans. The select board has been working with regional and state planning commissions to familiarize themselves with options. These will be discussed at the special town meeting.

Eventually the project will need to be funded by the town either through a bond or other tax mechanism. Without knowing the costs associated with the design and construction phases of the project it is impossible to determine the impact to taxes.

A decision needs to be made if all Jamaica residents will be paying for this system (even those not connected to the system) or if the town to creates a fire district which would mirror the areas that are connected to the new water system. This could limit the responsibility of the repayment of the loans/bond to only those within the district.

What are the potential long term benefits to the town? Economic? Property values?

The benefits to the town would be the ability to open/change businesses that are currently limited by their public water permits. New businesses could lead to economic growth for the village.

Other examples point to the fact that public water systems generally increase property values. Economic growth also has the potential to expand the tax base thus lowering the overall tax rate.

Why as a resident who has a water source (well) should I support this project?

This project will be to the benefit of the village businesses that want to expand or businesses that want to come into the village. New businesses would bring in more people to the village and this economic and social activity could potentially lead to higher property values in village although there is not guarantee of this.

Although there will be costs to maintain the town system residents will no longer be responsible for the maintenance of their own wells and water sources.

What about 2nd homeowners?

Second homeowners will have to help repay the costs and maintenance of the system the same as full time residents. They will also reap the potential benefits of increased activity in the village and those connected to the new system will have a safe drinking water source.

What are the unknowns?

There are many unknowns in this process including:

- Total cost of design/construction
- How the project will be funded?
- Which residents will pay for the system (creation of fire district)?
- Will the systems attract businesses and bring about any economic growth and development?

The Select Board continues to move the project forward at the will of the town and as each phase is completed more decisions will be made and more of these unknowns will be answered.