

By John McKenna

GOSHEN – The idea of an intermunicipal agreement that would permit the Woodridge Lake Sewer District to pipe its wastewater to Litchfield for treatment has the support of the Board of Selectmen.

Selectmen on Tuesday reviewed a Dec. 15 letter from Raymond Turri, president of the WLSD board of directors, asking for help in striking a deal with Litchfield that would allow WLSD to solve its wastewater problem.

WLSD for more than 30 years has been under a state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection order to upgrade its own wastewater treatment plant. Modernizing the facility would cost an estimated \$31 million, which WLSD has ruled out as too costly.

An option of sending wastewater to Torrington has also been dismissed due to cost, leaving Litchfield's wastewater treatment plant as the destination favored by WLSD, which is willing to help fund a necessary 20-year upgrade of the plant.

“At this point in time, the Litchfield connection is WLSD's best option and the best opportunity for Litchfield to address wastewater treatment issues that it may encounter in the future,” Turri wrote in his letter.

Selectmen are eager to help move the process along in the wake of a Dec. 7 conference call involving First Selectman Todd Carusillo, Litchfield First Selectman Denise Raap, other Litchfield officials, and DEEP representative Nisha Patel.

“I liked what I heard and now we just have to put Goshen and Litchfield together,” Carusillo told his board. “Hopefully we can make a connection that makes everyone happy and eliminates any problems in the future.”

Other participants in the conference call were Raap, Litchfield Water Pollution Control Authority member William Buckley, Selectman Jeffrey Zullo, and Litchfield public works Director Raz Alexe.

Buckley, in the call, said any negotiations on a potential intermunicipal agreement should involve Litchfield and Goshen and not WLSD. Before negotiations could start, Buckley added, the WPCA needs to determine the scope and cost of an upgrade of its wastewater treatment plant so that it meets Litchfield's needs.

WLSD's wastewater treatment plant is five decades old and failing. It has been identified by DEEP as a polluter of tributaries leading to Bantam Lake, which has had longstanding water quality issues.

Under a plan proposed by WLSD in 2020, wastewater from Woodridge Lake's 700 homes would flow south to Litchfield via a dedicated pipe on Beach Street, Milton Road and Constitution Way, where it would connect with a pipe leading to the wastewater treatment plant on Stoddard Road.

The idea has been met with resistance from residents of the Litchfield section of Beach Street and has yet to be entertained by Litchfield's Board of Selectmen or Water Pollution Control Authority. In a statement Wednesday, Raap said it would be premature for the board to weigh in on the idea of an intermunicipal agreement without knowing what it would cost to upgrade the treatment plant.

The WPCA in January expects to award a contract giving the engineering firm of Woodard and Curran the task of assessing the needs of the plant and pegging an estimated cost of an upgrade.

Once a cost is determined, Turri wrote, Litchfield and Goshen could forge an intermunicipal agreement.

"The board of directors of WLSD has been working for years to develop an economical and environmentally responsible solution to continue to protect the water qualities of our communities," Turri wrote. "We believe, and also believe that DEEP shares this view as well, that an interconnection with the Litchfield plant is the best solution for not only WLSD users but the wider community as a whole."

An intermunicipal agreement would have to be approved at town meetings in Goshen and Litchfield.

"This is a necessary step for us to take," Goshen Selectman Mark Harris said. "We have a problem that has to be resolved for the good of everyone."

Contact John McKenna at jmckenna33@optonline.net.