

Hingham Government Study Committee Questions

Hingham Sewer Department

- 1. Please state your department's or committee's charge or job description.**
 - To insure the uninterrupted sewer disposal service of approximately 2,600 residences, businesses and municipal customers.
 - To adhere to the best available practices for maintaining and operating a municipal sewer system
 - To operate in a fiscally sound manner to prevent unnecessary spending and expenditures
 - To adhere to state and local guidelines pertaining to wastewater disposal and handling

- 2. To whom is your department or committee accountable?**
 - Three elected citizens serve as the Department Head on the Sewer Commission and have ultimate say over what happens within the department. They set the sewer rate calculation, establish the annual operating budget and serve as Officials are elected to a three-year term, with one officials term expiring each year on a rotating basis
 - As with every board, the Sewer Commission is accountable to the citizens of the Town of Hingham for its actions and to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority on a state level for the wastes it delivers to them

- 3. What three things contribute most to the successful functioning of your department or committee?**
 - An open line of communication between the Department Head and operating crew insures that the goals and objectives of the department and Commission are in par with each other
 - A well-maintained operating system that minimizes the need for continual upgrades and replacement of equipment
 - An effective preventative maintenance plan to extend the life of existing equipment and to reduce the need for Capital expenditures

- 4. What three things would you change to bring about more effective functioning?**
 - Unfortunately, the changes that would make the operations run more effectively are costly. First would be the addition of a SCADA (Supervisory Control & Data Acquisition) system which would automate many of the functions that are done manually now and transmit pump station data electronically.
 - Second would be a long-term infrastructure replacement program to replace or rebuild many of the older structures and piping throughout the system. This would reduce the amount of time and money being spent on repairs and focus on preventative things. We have approximately 33-miles of municipal sewer in Hingham, some dating back to the early 1900's even though the official North Hingham Sewer District wasn't created until about 1955.

- Allowing the purchase of and re-instituting the use of the push-to-talk telephone/radio systems would enable direct communication between the field crew, Supervisor and office staff. The Town got away from the use of Nextels and went with Verizon as the cell carrier which does offer the push-to-talk feature. With that feature, everyone can communicate instantly with one or all members of the crew at once. Currently, we utilize either regular cell phone usage or a two-way radio that has intermittent outages in certain areas of the Sewer District

5. What challenges do you anticipate that might impact the work of your department or committee in the future and what changes would you suggest for addressing those challenges?

- Escalating costs of doing business and continuous hikes in the required services such as electricity cost and deliverance, waste fees and repair costs are always a problem and the only way to counter them is to burden the rate payer with those escalations in the sewer-use charges
- An aging sewer system is always a concern. Continued preventative and responsive maintenance are the only ways to combat these in an efficient and cost effective way
- The continuance, finalization and carrying out of the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan and the resolutions it suggests for the wastewater needs of the Town will have a huge impact on this department. There is potential for a large expansion of duties, responsibilities and expenditures through this plan that will need strict and continuous oversight.

6. Do you have anything to add?

- The Sewer Department functions very well as an autonomous board, there is a diverse set of backgrounds from each of the Commissioners that lends to a very well handled and smooth running Board capable of handling the daily operations of a municipal utility. The daily operations are carried out through the field crew headed by a Supervisor that is in direct contact with the Sewer Commission and the office is efficiently run by an Office Administrator that serves as the liaison to the Commission in the Town Hall. She is responsible for the billing and money assets of the department. We are willing and able to handle any situation or emergency presented to us and continue to perform in an efficient and effective manner and it shows through our fiscal awareness.