



THE COSTS OF DOING NOTHING

One **wastewater solution** option Yarmouth could pursue is to simply do nothing to advance wastewater treatment in the town. Having been rebuffed by voters at the 2011 Town Meeting vote on a previous attempt to pass and implement a sewer plan, the town could consider that a mandate from the voters to leave municipal wastewater treatment aside and not address it any further. While the do-nothing alternative is theoretically possible, there a number of costs that would accrue to the town for doing nothing:

REGULATORY RAMIFICATIONS

Massachusetts DEP Regulations

- The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) will designate certain portions of communities that are not moving forward to address wastewater treatment infrastructure, as “**nitrogen sensitive watershed**” areas.
- Nitrogen sensitive watershed areas would be subject to additional regulations that would likely require every property with a septic system to upgrade their system to full Title 5 compliance, and likely could also require more advanced systems that would mitigate and remove nitrogen from septic tank effluent before being discharged into leach fields.
- These on-site nitrogen removal systems are much more complex and sensitive than a standard Title 5 septic system and would require additional, costly operation, maintenance, and reporting costs to ensure the system functions appropriately and removes the necessary amount of nitrogen as dictated by the MassDEP.
- According to a report published by the UMass Donahue Institute in November 2018, the estimated cost to a homeowner for an on-site nitrogen removal system upgrade to an existing Title 5 system would be approximately \$20,000. Additionally \$2,600 would be required in annual operating and maintenance costs, for a total annualized cost (amortized) of \$4,525. This cost is **more than three times** the comparable annual cost (\$1,335) of installing and hooking up to a municipal wastewater treatment system (amortized over 15 years, and including usage fees)¹.



Third Party Lawsuits

- A Mass DEP settlement of a lawsuit brought by a third party in 2014 requires Cape Cod towns and the Cape Cod Commission to develop plans to address water quality issues.
- Further action on this lawsuit could continue if sufficient progress is not made. In June 2018 a suit was filed against two beach-front resorts for not doing enough to reduce nitrogen pollution into nearby waters.
- This move was widely seen as an indication by interested third parties that it was ready to move into a new phase of effort that could target more **individual property owners** in order to speed progress¹.



EFFECTS ON RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

- The cost burdens for updating residential septic systems discourages property owners from investing in their properties.
- Without the ability to add an extra bedroom or an in-law suite, many families find it hard to stay on Cape Cod when they have another child or need to move their parents into the same home.
- Wastewater concerns have led to an increasing number of residential properties being required to add deed restrictions limiting the number of bedrooms a house can legally have, essentially locking them from future expansions or conversions.
- The introduction of an off-site wastewater treatment system in lieu of raised septic could raise property values, notably on coveted coastal properties¹.

EFFECTS ON BUSINESSES AND TOURISM

- Yarmouth, and Route 28 in particular, needs quality redevelopment and reinvestment in order to both maintain and strengthen its status as a first class vacation destination for the Northeast and beyond.
- Poor water quality resulting in beach closures and an onerous traffic situation can turn visitors off from future visits to Yarmouth.
- Most businesses do not want to be in the wastewater treatment business and will therefore be reluctant to invest in their properties .
- Many Yarmouth motel properties are also likely to remain derelict without wastewater investments as they are very difficult to sell without it.
- The costs for restaurants to add their own wastewater treatment systems can reach \$200,000 to \$300,000 which many operators find economically prohibitive. Owners of restaurant properties can also find it difficult to secure long-term leases or to sell their properties without being able to offer adequate wastewater capacity.



Footnotes:

1. *Wastewater Infrastructure's Effects on Economic Opportunity in Yarmouth* (Page 24-29) , UMass Donahue Institute, November 2018