September 17, 2026 OLSBA Public Hearing Meeting Minutes

Key Takeaways

- This was a mandatory public hearing for the Old Lyme Shores Beach Association (OLSBA) Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA), required by Connecticut General Statutes prior to construction commencement.
- Construction of the internal sewer project is now scheduled to begin September 28th (delayed from September 21st), led by contractor Baltazar.
- The project includes gravity sewers, stormwater pipes, and road repaving
- Estimated per-property assessment is approximately $65,000–$67,000, payable over 20 years at 2% interest via a state Clean Water Fund loan.
- Significant community concern was raised regarding the substantial increase in cost
- A sewer use charge of approximately $300–$500/year will be added on top of the capital assessment once the system is operational.
- 115 of 190 properties have already certified their sewer stub location via the customer portal; 30 properties remain unclaimed.
- Residents who use private wells are urged to schedule well testing before construction begins.

Discussed Topics

1. Meeting Opening and Attendance

Jay (moderator) opened the public hearing at 7:06pm, confirmed attendance of WPCA board members and guest speakers, and read the official public hearing notice as published in the Hartford Courant on September 6th.

- **Details**
  - Jay: Read the public hearing notice per Connecticut General Statutes, Title VII, Chapter 103, Section 247A, for a hearing held September 17, 2026 at 7PM via Zoom.
  - WPCA members confirmed present: Dede DeRosa, Bob Palazzo, Dennis Colombie, Roger Zito.
  - WPCA members absent: Chris Shelton, Tim Larson (traveling).

2. Project Construction Update (Presented by Mike Nelson, Fuss & O'Neill)

Mike Nelson provided a comprehensive update on the current status and upcoming construction schedule.

- **Details**
    - Mike: Construction start date moved to Monday, September 28th due to delays with the shared system and other logistics.
    - Mike: Spent the day meeting with residents at Old Lyme Shores to finalize sewer stub locations and answer questions about well testing.
    - Mike: Test pits and drilling are ongoing along streets to map rock formations; contractor is considering blasting in some areas.
    - Mike: A project sign will be erected; a meeting with the local conservation agent on erosion controls is planned.
    - Mike: Of 190 properties, 115 have certified their stub location; only 30 remain unclaimed.
    - Mike: A customer portal is available for residents to claim their parcel, view stub locations, update water source information, and find registered local contractors.
- **Conclusion**
    - Construction is imminent; residents are encouraged to use the portal and finalize stub certifications before work begins.

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3. Construction Sequence and What Residents Should Expect

Mike Nelson outlined the phased construction plan and day-to-day impact on residents.

- **Details**
    - Mike: Phase 1 begins in the northern portion of the neighborhood (generally north of Route 156), where gravity sewer crossings must be installed first before the shared force main and pump station components.
    - Mike: Contractor will set downstream manholes and build across each road sequentially, then complete the full north section — estimated 5–6 weeks of work.
    - Mike: Phase 2 will begin at Sea Spray Lane and move north and east through the neighborhood, street by street.
    - Mike: A lay-down yard for materials and equipment has been established on Shore Road near Miami Beach on a vacant lot.

    - Mike Nelson: Materials and equipment will be staged in the road right-of-way (not over property lines) several streets ahead of active work.
    - Mike: Residents should expect loud equipment, multiple dump trucks, 8–10 workers, cones, and traffic police when work is in front of their home — typically only 1–2 days per property.
    - Mike: Work hours are 7:00 AM to approximately 3:30 PM; open trenches will not be left overnight.
    - Mike: Resident inspector Nick Tella will be on-site every day as the liaison between residents and the crew.
    - Mike: Crossing Route 156 will cause traffic impacts; police will supervise the work zone.
- **Conclusion**
    - Residents should expect temporary but significant disruption when work reaches their street; Nick Tella is the primary on-site contact for immediate concerns.

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4. Legal and Financial Framework Post-Construction (Presented by Attorney Norb Church)

Attorney Church outlined the legal steps and financial obligations that will follow project completion.

- **Details**
    - Church: After all bills are paid and state reimbursements received, the WPCA will hold a hearing to impose assessments on all properties.
    - Church: Estimated assessment is approximately $65,000–$67,000 per property (covering both internal sewer and shared project costs), divided equally across approximately 193 assessment units.
    - Church: Payments will be structured over 20 years at 2% interest via a Connecticut state Clean Water Fund loan; the WPCA will pass payments directly to the state.
    - Church: Payment frequency (annual, semi-annual, or quarterly) is yet to be determined by the WPCA.
    - Church: A sewer use charge of approximately $300–$500/year will cover operating costs (electricity, pump maintenance, treatment fees from New London, Waterford, and East Lyme) and a capital reserve/sinking fund.

- Church: A mandatory hookup rule will be adopted; a timetable (e.g., 6–12 months after sewers become available) will be established.
- Church: A limited exemption from mandatory hookup may be considered for properties where a fully engineered, variance-free septic system was installed within 3 years of sewer availability — modeled after the Point of Woods precedent — with required pump-outs every 3 years.

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5. Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) Prevention

Mark Bernacki raised concerns about cross-connections between stormwater and sewer systems, prompting a detailed response from Mike Nelson.

- **Details**
  - Mark: Asked whether there is oversight to prevent stormwater/flood pipes from being incorrectly connected to the sewer system, referencing past I&I issues in New Britain.
  - Mike: Full-time on-site inspection by Nick Tella will ensure all pipe installations are per plan, tight, and waterproof during construction.
  - Mike: Strongly advised residents never to connect sump pumps, foundation drains, gutters, or downspouts to the sewer system — only wastewater should enter the sewer.
  - Mike: Sump pumps should discharge to the yard (at least 20 feet from the foundation) or, if bylaws permit, to a catch basin in front of the house.
  - Church: Added that downspouts and gutters are also common sources of I&I and must not be connected to the sewer.
  - Mike: Noted that over time, sewer systems naturally develop leaks and will eventually require lining; a reserve fund is essential for this.
- **Conclusion**
  - Residents must not connect any clean water sources (sump pumps, gutters, downspouts, foundation drains) to the sewer system; doing so increases treatment costs for all users.

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6. Stormwater Financing and Community Cost Concerns

John Mandracchia and Jack Thomas raised significant concerns about the rising cost of the stormwater component and the governance process behind its approval.

- **Details**
    - John: Noted that the per-EDU cost has risen from ~$13,160 (communicated two years ago before the vote) to ~$20,000 — a 33%+ increase — and questioned whether the community ever specifically voted to approve the stormwater project (as opposed to just authorizing a bond).
    - Church: Stated the vote was to fund sewers and stormwater and was done by the Board of Governors.
    - John: Disputed that inflation alone (2.5–3%) explains a 33% increase and argued the expenditure should have been put to a community-wide referendum.
    - Jack: Clarified that the 2% state Clean Water Fund loan covers sewer-eligible expenses, but approximately $2.29 million of the stormwater cost (~two-thirds of the $3.4M stormwater budget) requires private financing at higher interest rates.
    - Mike Nelson: Confirmed stormwater budget is $3.4M; approximately $1.18M (one-third) is eligible for grant funding and suppressed 2% loans; the remaining ~$2.29M requires private financing.
    - Jack: Questioned whether the stormwater assessment should be divided equally among 192 units, since stormwater is a separate project from the sewer.
    - Church: Confirmed the assessment will cover everything — sewer and stormwater — assessed together.
    - DeDe: Read language from a community document (referencing a 2012 bond resolution, updated in 2019 and 2025) stating the bond authorized "wastewater treatment project, including sewer, stormwater, and road repairs."
    - Jay: Acknowledged the bond language includes stormwater but noted no specific appropriation was made for it; deferred policy decisions to the Board of Governors.
    - Janet Ryan-Roman: Confirmed that two years ago at a library presentation, the communicated estimate was $27,400/year and $50,795 total; expressed concern about the ~32% increase and requested more frequent cost notifications.
    - Jay: Committed to quarterly financial updates from Fuss & O'Neill to keep members informed.
- **Conclusion**

- Community members expressed strong concern about cost increases and governance transparency; the Board of Governors has contractually authorized Baltazar to proceed; policy decisions on stormwater financing and assessment methodology are the Board of Governors' responsibility and will be conveyed to them.

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7. Undeveloped Lots and Future Assessments

A chat question raised the issue of undeveloped lots potentially becoming buildable with the availability of municipal sewer and water.

- **Details**
  - Mike Nelson: Noted that with municipal water and sewer now available, previously unbuildable lots may now qualify for development; suggested owners consult local zoning and Ledge Light Health Department.
  - Mike: Each additional stub/assessment unit would reduce the per-property capital cost for all members.
  - Church: Confirmed that Connecticut statutes allow the WPCA to impose assessments on undeveloped lots at the time they are built upon, at the same rate as all other properties.
  - Jay: Noted the sewer ordinance will address this scenario to ensure future buildable lots are properly assessed.
- **Conclusion**
  - Owners of undeveloped lots should consult zoning and health department officials; future buildable lots will be assessed at the same rate as existing properties when developed.

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8. Road Repaving

Mike Nelson and Attorney Church highlighted that road repaving is included in the project scope.

- **Details**
  - Mike: All roads will be repaved as part of the project; urged residents to arrange any Connecticut Water connections before paving to avoid future road cuts.
  - Church: Emphasized that residents will receive new sewers, stormwater infrastructure, and newly paved roads.

- **Conclusion**
    - Residents should coordinate any planned utility connections (e.g., Connecticut Water) before roads are paved to preserve road condition.

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9. Blasting Protocols and Pre-Construction Video Documentation

Jean Camillo asked about notification procedures for blasting; Bob Palazzo raised additional requirements.

- **Details**
    - Jean: Asked whether residents will be notified in advance of any blasting.
    - Mike Nelson: Confirmed blasting is being considered, likely on the Billow Road side; triggers vibration monitoring, crack gauges, and a full set of contractual protocols.
    - Mike: A pre-construction video of the entire neighborhood (exterior of homes, windows, foundations, driveways, mailboxes) was completed by a videographer to document pre-existing conditions.
    - Dede DeRosa: Observed the videographer working from the street, not entering private property.
    - Bob: Noted that residents within a certain distance of blasting may have the right to request interior home video documentation, potentially via certified mail notification; suggested this be verified against spec language.
    - Jay: Noted that Vice President Paul Yellen, with fire service experience, will be involved in fire marshal approvals for blasting permits.
- **Conclusion**
    - Blasting protocols are in the project specifications; Mike Nelson will review spec language regarding certified mail notification and interior video documentation rights for nearby residents.

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10. Well Testing Reminder

Mike Nelson issued a final call for residents on private wells to schedule water testing.

- **Details**
    - Mike: Residents drinking from private wells must contact the lab to schedule a well test before construction begins; contact information available from Mike, Jay, DeDe, or Dennis.

    - Mike: Residents who wish to opt out must return a signed opt-out form to Mike for state reporting purposes.
- **Conclusion**
    - Well testing is a state requirement; residents on private wells must act promptly to avoid delaying construction.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10pm