

Pocono Township sewer project wakes some from slumber

Wednesday's meeting moved to larger venue

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For the last two years, Pocono Township has held public, monthly or bi-monthly meetings dedicated almost solely to its \$78 million sewer project.

To say the meetings were sparsely attended would be an understatement. Rarely would more than 10 people show up, with 90 percent of the attendance consisting of township or business officials with a direct interest in the project.

In the past two months, as the stakes surrounding the sewer plan have increased, so has the audience.

And the concern.

To accommodate the growing public interest in the project, the township will move its Wednesday meeting to the Monroe Campus of Northampton Community College. The meeting starts at 6 p.m.

The meeting will be held at the campus' Community Room. Officials at the school plan to set the room to hold about 150 people.

The meeting will also include engineers, lawyers and township officials closely involved in the project, according to Board of Supervisors Chairman Frank Hess.

Members of the public have become increasingly frustrated with township officials who can't answer their questions about the system at regular supervisors meetings. Many of the project's true experts don't attend those meetings.

"We have to do it," Hess said of moving the meeting and bringing in experts. "If people have answers, if they are informed, it makes a difference. The stories that are being told and the (misinformation) going around, it's not good. We've got to get all the questions on the table."

The project has been a growing concern for the township since the announcement in March that the projected usage had dropped by more than a third.

The original flow projections of 972,000 gallons per day were made in 2007 in the early stages of the project. When the projected flow was re-evaluated earlier this year, only about 637,000 gallons per day were there.

Along with business loss during the rough economy, Great Wolf Lodge informed the township it would not be hooking into the system. The resort would have been the second-biggest user of the system, behind vaccine-maker Sanofi Pasteur.

The drop in usage sent the projected usage rates soaring from about \$1,100 to \$1,200 to more than \$1,400

per equivalent dwelling unit.

An equivalent dwelling unit is equal to about the amount an average home would use. Most businesses would use more of the units, paying more in yearly sewer costs.