

Bond Brook CSO Project – Update to Augusta City Council – January 6, 2011

Ken Knight, Chairman, Greater Augusta Utility District

- I. **Project Purpose:** The District has previously briefed you several times on what we call the Bond Brook Combined Sewer Overflow or CSO Project. The District’s Board of Trustees appreciates the support and continued interest of the City in this important project. As we prepare to move to the construction phase of this project, the value of District and City collaboration will increase.

The District is required by law to eliminate or mitigate combined sewer overflows. Our permit to discharge wastewater into the Kennebec River requires that the four CSO’s along Bond Brook be controlled now.

While we might be frustrated that it is a coordinated federal and state mandate that is requiring the District to perform this work, let’s not forget the important environmental benefits that will result. The District has spent several years thoroughly studying the need and appropriate resolution of this project and the Trustees are unanimously convinced of the project’s environmental and economic importance to the Kennebec River Valley.

During heavy rain or snowmelt events, the pipes along Bond Brook can’t fully carry the load and they overflow untreated human waste into Bond Brook. Bond Brook flows into the Kennebec River. When this project is complete, untreated sewer water won’t flow into Bond Brook. The public health and safety benefits from this project will be vast.

The growing economic importance of the west side of Augusta to the Kennebec Valley is another reason why this project became the priority for the District. That growth cannot be supported by the current sewer collection system and remain in compliance with the District’s environmental licenses for discharge into the Kennebec River.

- II. **Project Timeline:** The design work for this project is nearly complete. We hope to be soliciting bids later this winter and starting construction this summer.

As a reminder, construction will involve replacing 4,400 linear feet of “interceptor” pipe along Mt. Vernon Avenue; installing approximately 1,400 linear feet of new pipe in Mill park to store stormwater; replacing 2 pump stations along Mt. Vernon Avenue with one new pump station near Rockingham Electric; and replacing an existing discharge pipe.

Once construction begins, we expect that it will take up to two years to complete. An updated project map is on the District’s website.

- III. **GAUD’s Commitment to Manage Disruptions:** A great deal of advance planning has anticipated and, we hope, addressed the disruptions that will be caused by this construction project.

When pipes are installed beneath public roads, traffic will be constricted for a short period of time. The District will continue to consult with MDOT and work with the City's engineering, public works, public safety and school departments to ensure that critical services can be delivered as needed. An aggressive public outreach program will ensure advance notice to the traveling public to ensure that they are aware of scheduled work dates so they can plan accordingly and seek alternate routes to their destination.

City residents, who live in buildings along Mt. Vernon Avenue, particularly, will be inconvenienced by some temporary loss of parking and by construction noise. The District will work with the selected contractor to minimize disruption to people who live in this area and is committed to providing a number of advance notices to residents in these neighborhoods prior to the commencement of construction so that they know what to expect and when to expect it.

We don't expect significant impacts to local businesses but the District will be working with all of them in advance to plan accommodations for any impact such as lost parking during pipe installation.

We are working with the City to plan now to address any disruption of use of Mill Park during construction. We understand the desire to continue to use Mill Park as the location of the Farmer's Market and will aggressively work with our contractor, once selected, to seek to accommodate that use. Be assured that Mill Park will be restored to a better condition once the project is complete.

IV. **Costs:** The District has already spent \$4 million planning and designing this project, and expects to spend \$11 million more to construct it. The 20-year loan for this project from DEP's Revolving Loan Fund has been secured in recognition of this project's environmental priority.

We are committed to aggressively managing the impact of this project on storm water and sewer rates. The \$500,000 CDBG grant that the City has secured for us will help reduce the impact. We have also been notified that the District will be awarded a grant by the state to forgive 5% of the loan due to the integrity of our asset management planning.

Once constructed, the project will make the system of pipes and pumps much more reliable to operate and reduce operating costs.

Once we select a contractor and understand the costs of this project, the District will incorporate all this cost and savings data into our 5-year cash flow plan, which will enable us to accurately speak to the impact on rates. This project will not impact drinking water rates which will be decreasing once the debt for the water treatment plant is paid in November, 2011.

We would suggest and welcome the creation of a Joint Working Group of city and utility officials, both elected and appointed, to closely monitor this project's implementation so that no opportunity for efficiency is lost.

We are very appreciative of the collaboration we've received from city officials and the support we've received from the City Council.