

TOWN OF GILL
M A S S A C H U S E T T S



www.gillmass.org

January 9, 2017

Dear Sewer Customer:

On December 12, 2016 the Sewer Commissioners voted to adopt a new sewer rate of \$0.1930 per cubic foot. The rate is effective with the enclosed bill, which corresponds to water meter usage between the August 26 and December 26, 2016 meter readings.

The increase is necessary to keep pace with a 17% increase in the rate that Montague charges to Gill for treatment and disposal of sewage. Montague's rate increase was adopted on November 1, 2016, and was retroactive to July 1, 2016.

Printed on the reverse side of this letter is an informational handout that explains problems associated with household sump pumps and perimeter drains that are connected to the sewer lines. Sump pumps and perimeter drains introduce unmetered water into the sewer system. The treatment costs for unmetered uses are shared by ALL sewer customers. This means that you help pay for your neighbors' sump pumps and perimeter drains!

Please take a few minutes to review the handout. Reducing the amount of groundwater and stormwater in the sewer lines will help control the costs of operating the sewer system.

For sewer customers who use water from their homes to fill swimming pools and spas, it is possible to receive abatement of sewer charges related to those uses. An updated abatement form, with the newest sewer rate, is available on the Selectboard/Sewer Commissioners page of the Town's website:

<http://www.gillmass.org/selectboard.php>

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Ray Purington, Administrative Assistant to the Selectboard and Board of Sewer Commissioners, at (413) 863-9347 or administrator@gillmass.org.

Sincerely,

Ray Purington, Administrative Assistant
Gill Selectboard/Board of Sewer Commissioners

DO YOU HAVE A SUMP PUMP OR PERIMETER DRAIN IN YOUR BASEMENT THAT DISCHARGES WATER “SOMEWHERE!!!”?

If your answer is yes, please read the following carefully. If no, please recycle this flyer!

The Town of Gill's Sewer Use Regulations (Article III, Sec. 10) and the Massachusetts Plumbing Code prohibit the discharge of storm water and groundwater from basements, whether commercial or residential, into the Town's sanitary sewer system.

What is the issue with groundwater from my basement going into the sanitary sewer system?
Discharges from your toilets, sinks, dishwashers and washing machines go into the sanitary sewer system and flow to Gill's Sewer Pump Station on Riverview Drive. From there, it is pumped beneath the river and into Montague's sewer system, where it is treated at their Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) before being safely discharged to the Connecticut River.

When groundwater and storm water (rain, snow melt) enter the sewer system it increases operational costs at the pump station and WPCF by unnecessarily increasing the volume of water that needs to be pumped and treated. The increased costs are in turn passed along to you, the sewer customer, by way of increased rates.

My basement gets wet. If I can't discharge the groundwater in my basement to the sanitary sewer system, where is it supposed to go?

Groundwater from basements is not polluted and should be directed to the storm drain system in the street, if one exists, or outside to an area on your property away from the building, roads and sidewalks. The storm drain system is the infrastructure that carries rain water off of the streets. The open gridded catch basins on the sides of streets are connected to the storm drain system. This water does not go to the pump station but rather to a nearby river, brook or wetland. In Riverside, most storm water ultimately ends up in the Connecticut River.

I'm not sure where the water in my basement goes. How can I find out?

Randy Crochier, a member of Gill's Board of Health as well as a Selectman, has offered to look at the piping in your basement and help identify any that should be re-piped elsewhere. There is no charge for this inspection. If you are interested, please contact Randy at 413-863-2353 or health@gillmass.org

(Continued on other side.)

When I get water in my basement I just remove the cap on the sewer line in order to drain the basement. Is this a problem?

YES, and a far larger one than violating the Town's Sewer Use Regulations! You are putting your family's health and property at serious risk. If there is a blockage in the sewer main in the street while your cap is removed, the sewage will back up and flood your basement. Besides the obvious health issue, everything in your basement, including the furnace, washer, dryer etc will be ruined and you will have no recourse since the cap should never be off your sewer line in the first place.

Worse yet, the open cap allows toxic sewer gases (methane, hydrogen sulfide, etc.) to seep into your home. **This is extremely dangerous!**

If it is determined that the water in my basement does go to the sanitary sewer system what do I do next?

First, you should contact the Highway Department (863-2324) so they can determine if there is a storm drain system on your street to which you can redirect the discharge. Depending on many factors the next step may be to hire a plumber to install a sump pump or redirect the discharge from an existing pump. The ideal solution, if available to you, is to send the discharge to the storm drain system in the street, which would involve hiring a contractor to run a line from the basement to the pipe in the street. (A garden hose from your sump pump to the storm drain grate is not an acceptable solution.)

Making these fixes sounds like a hassle. Why is it in my best interest to do this?

Discharge of groundwater and storm water into the sanitary sewer system is an illegal connection. Through its Sewer Use Regulations the town can mandate correction of this problem. Failure to correct the problem can result in civil penalties and fines up to \$5,000 (Sewer Use Regulations, Article X, Sec. 4). This is **NOT** the course the Town wants to pursue.

Additionally, over the next few months the town will be working with local real estate agents, lenders, plumbers and home inspectors to educate them about this problem. Home inspectors will have to inform potential buyers of your property of any illegal connections and lending institutions may have issues financing the purchase of a building that has illegal sewer connections. Therefore, if you are thinking of selling your home in the near future or just want to protect it as a long term investment, it is important to correct any illegal sewer connections.

Thank you for taking the time to read this flyer, and for helping to do your part to reduce the inflow of groundwater and storm water into Gill's sanitary sewer system. Your efforts now will help improve the performance of the system and reduce the costs to operate it.