

In Bayside

Utility concerns continue

By Toni Mailloux

As the Northport Village Corporation, commonly referred to as Bayside, continues to struggle with utility issues, the overseers of the corporation were told during their monthly meeting Sunday they have also managed to upset residents of the Shore and Bluff roads.

Ken Vlodet, a former president of the corporation, said he's concerned board members have been focusing on customer numbers that "have no basis in reality." He said a recent story in *The Independent* quoted overseers as stating, "Instead of 40 new customers, only 17 have hooked into the system" and "We spent three years studying for 17 people who wanted water."

Previously an overseer said, "\$1 million for 15...They got off good."

There have also been comments about residents on Shore and Bluff roads paying the minimum fee of \$100 to hook up, which was called "ridiculously low" compared to the cost of drilling a well.

Vlodet said the most important reason for the water project was that it corrected a serious health risk and eliminated a previous problem of negative pressures. Vlodet said even though customer numbers should not be such a concern, "there are less

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than a handful of Shore Road households who are not on the water system."

Vlodet told the overseers, "There was a second benefit in the vote taken at the 2002 annual meeting (to pursue the project) and that was a sense of the community joining together...I am concerned that the continued focus on customer counts and connection fees is once again driving a wedge between the two areas of the village. It is fostering a very unhealthy atmosphere in our community."

Vlodet said 2003, during which he was president of the corporation and the water project was in the planning stages, was "one of the most difficult years of my life...nobody from Shore or Bluff roads is willing to serve on the board of overseers."

Bill Cressey, who recently became a trustee for the utility department, said when he agreed to serve he thought the issues would be about the village's sewer problems, not the water project. "I hope we put this behind us," he said.

Jo Huntoon, the present president of the corporation, said, "I grew up in what is now David Crofoot's house on the Shore Road. As a kid I was one of 'those people.' It hasn't changed in 70 years and probably will continue." He urged everyone to concentrate on the image of the Bayside wharf, which he said is what Bayside is

all about, and "forget the rest of the crap."

Tim Samway said the comments in the newspaper were "hurtful."

Overseer David Crofoot, who is chairman of the board of trustees for the utility department, said work is continuing on lining up licensed operators for the town's wastewater treatment plant and water system. He said an individual has been found with an operator's license for the treatment plant but he is not a licensed water operator and can't take the test until April.

Crofoot said a company may be hired that would use its water license to supervise that individual until April. There is a third person who is currently checking the plant every day.

The overseers voted to authorize the utility department to employ the necessary combination of people to keep both systems operating in conformance with state laws and requirements.

Crofoot said it's unclear yet whether a rate increase will be needed until the contracts are signed.

However, he said there's already a problem with the water budget that may require an increase. In 2004, the principal and interest payments for water projects were around \$63,000. In 2005 that climbs to around \$83,000 and it will be 2019 before it gets back down to \$63,000. Crofoot said there is a discussion about whether it would be prudent to try to squeak by with the present rates for two years and he needs to

talk with the auditor. He said the water system would pick up new customers, which would help while the sewer system is maxed out.

Meanwhile the utility department is also hoping to set up a meeting with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to assess the findings of the phase 2 report that was recently completed. That report states that Bayside could not replace its current treatment plant for less than \$2 million and it's likely the cost would be \$3 million to \$4 million.

Per its consent agreement with the DEP, Bayside is supposed to submit a report in December on its search for funding for that work and is supposed to start work on designing a plant in January.

Crofoot said the 230 people served by the sewer system can't afford the cost and no funding sources have been located. He said the utility department would like to meet with the enforcement arm of the DEP and the funding arm at the same time. "We're willing to do it but we can't afford it. It makes little sense to spend engineering money for something we can't build," Crofoot said.

Overseer Judy Metcalf said it's hoped a meeting can be set for the first week in November.

Crofoot said Bayside had problems with its data at the treatment plant in August and September after the reader was struck by lightning. He said the reader was replaced quickly but then it was discovered a device in a well was also "fried" and it took longer to replace that.

"Is there a risk of penalties for the lack of reporting?" asked overseer Mike Robbins.

Crofoot said there is but a letter was sent to the DEP explaining what happened.

In other action, the overseers:

- learned the Northport town valuation went up 173 percent during the recent revaluation while the valuation of Bayside increased 218 percent;

- voted to do a dye test of the water pooling in Bayview Park to make sure it's not sewage and if it isn't to do the necessary drainage work to eliminate it;

- learned the funds for work at Community Hall have been depleted and the account is likely overspent by \$500 to \$600. However, the overseers had nothing but praise for the work that has been done with free labor;

- hired Bill Paige to do the plowing and sanding for the village for the same rate as last year;

- voted to put the winter parking ban in effect from Nov. 16 to April 15 from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.;

- heard from overseer Mike Robbins that one resident asked him to ask the overseers to consider meeting at a different time than 9:30 a.m. on Sunday so the meetings won't interfere with religious commitments. The board had no comment on the request;

- asked Paige to check the catch basins so they don't get plugged with leaves and to ask the town to clean them out in the spring; and

- voted to keep the same auditors for the upcoming year since they already have a new treasurer and officer manager.

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