

**TOWN OF SOMERS  
WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY**

**MEETING MINUTES  
OCTOBER 13, 2012  
7:00 PM TOWN HALL**

**I. CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Chairman James Botellio. Members present were Dan Fraro, Charles Colby, George Van Tasel, and Steven Getman. Also present was Steve Jacobs, Town Sanitarian.

Lisa Pellegrini, First Selectmen was present. Pat Bowe and Mary Anne Danyluk from the Dept. of Environmental Protection were present. Meg Harvey from the Dept. of Public Health was at the meeting also. There were also residents from the town in the audience.

**II. KING AND WATCHAUG ROAD ARSENIC CONTAMINATION**

Mr. Botellio said people from the State Department were present to explain cause of the arsenic well contamination and solutions to the problem. Mr. Botellio explained the state officials would take questions from the audience after they made their presentation.

Steve Jacobs, Town Sanitarian introduced the officials from the State. Steve explained that the most recent test results were in and he could give them out after the meeting. Steve explained that the officials from the Dept. of Environmental Protection were at the meeting to talk about the geology and ground water contamination. Meg Harvey from the Dept. of Public Health was available to answer health questions during and after the meeting.

An ariel view map was presented of the arsenic contamination around King and Watchaug Rds. Mary Ann Danyluk explained a geological bedrock map. She explained the map showing areas of concern marked in green. The areas of contamination are in a low lying area nestled between to surface water bodies (Watchaug Brook and Scantic River).

Pat Bowe spoke and explained the aerial map. He showed some wells had higher levels of arsenic than others. He noted that the arsenic that was showing up is in very deep water that has been there a lot of years (tens of thousands). He explained the water has gradually picked up contaminates in the form of arsenic in the basic bedrock. The said this is very common in the east coast from New Jersey to New Hampshire and throughout Connecticut.

Pat Bowe explained that generally for contaminates to be applied in surface do to industry or disposal, they are found in the higher groundwater. What they have found here is in the very deep water. He explained that arsenic is a toxin and carcinogen and needs to be removed from the water source to be safe.

Pat Bowe discussed water filtration systems can be purchased by the homeowners to get the arsenic out the of the water effectively. The cost of the filtration systems are between \$2700-\$3000.00. Mr. Bowe explained how the filtration systems worked and how to maintain them.

One of the audience member ask how long this arsenic condition has been around and why it was just detected now. Mr. Bowe said the condition has probably been around 20-50 million years. Steve Jacobs, Town Sanitarian explained that several years ago, a Watchaug Rd. resident ask for a test since they heard of well contamination in other areas of Somers. Trace levels were found at that time, under drinking water standards. As more wells were tested in the area, levels higher than the drinking water standard were found.

Meg Harvey from the Dept. of Health spoke next. She explained that none of the levels of arsenic detected are at a "health effect level" meaning none of the concentrations are high enough to expect to see health symptoms. She said that does not mean however, it is necessarily safe to continue drinking the water because arsenic is a known human carcinogen. She encouraged all homeowners affected to get filtration systems to be on the safe side. She said there is not a danger of arsenic going into your skin through bathing or washing. It is only harmful when ingested. The standards are set to be extra cautious, so the standards are set with a built in safety net.

An audience members ask if you could detect arsenic through a blood test. Meg Harvey explained yes, but it is difficult to detect organic from non-organic arsenic. Some arsenic is naturally occurring in shellfish and other foods. She explained that arsenic does not build up in your system like other chemicals.

Both the Dept. of Public health and the Dept. of Environmental Protection will remain as a support system to the Town of Somers.

Dorathy Webler ask about water main lines being installed to correct the problem. Mr. Bowe explained this would be very expensive (1-2 million dollars a mile).

Dave Gaskell of 200 Watchaug Rd. ask if an investigation had been completed and if there was documentation on the findings. Mr. Bowe said yes, they investigated reasons behind the contamination. On Sept 20, 2012 is when the investigation began. Mr. Bowe reported they went back and reviewed 1934 maps of the area. They found no indicators of anything that would indicate there was a dump/landfill, mill/factory, or orchards in the contaminated area. An air field was noted to be in the area at one time.

Audience members ask about other areas of the town affected by arsenic. There have been water filtration system put in homes about a quarter mile up the road. It was noted by some residents in the audience that apples orchards had been known to have existed those affected areas. Mr. Bowe again stated they found no indicators of previous orchards being in the King/Watchaug area.

Mary Ann Demount stated that this problem is very common all throughout Connecticut. She explained it is not highly unusual to detect arsenic in wells around this part of New England. About 2% of all wells in this part of the region have this issue.

Mrs. Shapiro of 192 Watchaug Road was concerned the arsenic contamination was man made fertilizers/chemicals used over time. Mr. Bo said there was no indication of this being the source of the problem.

Commission member George Van Tassel commented one of the wells in the middle of the contaminated area had no documented well depth and it was by a storage shed and had the highest level of contamination. He wanted more information on this area and the well depth. He was concerned it could have been causing surface contamination if it was a shallow well. Mr. Bowe said this was of no significance to their findings due to the randomness of nitrate levels.

Mr. Bowe reported he did not think the arsenic contamination was from fertilizers or man made sources since there were not high level of nitrates found in the water. He explained the pattern shows that it has been sitting there many years (since the rock was made. He does not expect the levels to increase dramatically. The levels may increase with the change of the seasons due to precipitation levels.

Mr. Walter Toploski of 183 King Road ask how this would affect property values. A brief discussion took place on reporting arsenic levels in the homes. Property values will go down if the filtration systems are not installed. Mr. Bowe reported property values stayed the same if filtration system were in place.

Mr. Botellio explained that the WPCA would like to put new regulations in place to test for arsenic and other known contaminates in the area. He said the state has been trying to do this for years but it gets thrown out by builders and the realtors because they don't want to spend the extra money to test for certain contaminates. He wants Somers to make it mandatory for these test to be done in order to protect residents of the town.

Steve Jacobs answered questions about cost of water tests and which contaminates are required by law to be tested. He explained that arsenic is not a required test so that is another reason arsenic may not have been found before now.

Dave Gaskell of 200 Watchaug Road ask how many wells in Somers have tested above toxic arsenic levels. Steve Jacobs said only two others besides the King/Watchaug area. Mr. Botellio said the WPCA said they would look a other possible areas in the town and expand testing. The town nor the state have the resources at this time to test all the wells in the town. It will be recommended that homeowners be responsible and have their well tested once a year to check for known contaminates. The residents will be responsible for paying the lab fee.

Mrs. Weber from 175 King Road. Asked about the state paying for the filtration system. Mr. Bowe explained the state statute says if it is naturally occurring the homeowner is responsible. Mr. Bowe said if it was found to be a community wide problem the state would help the town to find a cost effective solution such as 1) Filtrations System 2) Public Water Main 3) Community Well. Mr. Bowe suggested the filtration system were the best alternative, a good solution, and very effective. The filtration systems will usually last 5-6 years before having to be regenerated.

WPCA member Steve Getman ask if a resident wanted to put a filtration system on their own, how much more technical advice will be given from the state? Mr. Bowe said the town would be given ongoing assistance from the Dept of Environmental Protection.

The filtration system put in place in other places with similar arsenic problems, like New Jersey have been documented. Info about the New Jersey filtration systems are available for Somers

residents to review.

Walter Topolski of 183 King Road thought buying bottled water was a good idea. Mr. Bowe said that could work but this may not work in homes with young children or if you cook a lot since you should not be ingesting the water through cooking with it.

Mr. Botellio informed the residents more samples in the town would be taken. The WPCA will be working to help residents in every way they can. Residents can speak to Steve Jacobs, Town Sanitarian with any concerns.

*The WPCA took a 10 minute recess at 8:45 pm.*

**1. NEW BUSINESS-**

Steve Jacobs s received a quote \$1362.00 from Siemens Ind. For a Bioxide trial to treat the hydrogen sulfide problem in the primary wet well. A discussion ensued on the issue with the contractors/inspectors not using the right materials to build the chambers up to code. The equipment should have had a warranty up to 20 years and has already failed after only 5 years. The WPCA want to investigate why the tanks were not coated properly. The valves are also in need of replacement.

*A motion was made by Steve Getman to approve moving forward with trial. Seconded by Dan Fraro, all in favor, motion carried*

**IV. BILLS/TRANSFERS**

Avery Septic - \$260.50	Amco - \$360.00
Hach - \$56.82	Lloyd's Power Equip. - \$33.85
Phoenix Labs – \$60.00, \$60.00	Phoenix Labs - \$290.00, \$290.00
Somers Ace Hardware - \$3.49	

*A motion was made by Charles Colby to pay bills. Seconded by Van Tassel, all in favor, motion carried.*

There was a transfer of \$820.00 from Sewer accounts to the general fund to reimburse for G. Rostkowski's year end audit.

*A motion was made by Charles Colby to approve the transfer. Seconded by Van Tassel, all in favor, motions carried.*

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 9:09 pm by Charles Colby. Seconded by Steve Getman, all in favor, motion carried.*

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Julia Sarno, recording secretary*



