



Town of Marion
Two Spring Street
Marion, Massachusetts 02738

Board of Selectmen—

Randy L. Parker, Chairman
John P. Waterman, Vice-Chairman
Norman A. Hills, Clerk

Town Administrator—

James P. McGrail
508-748-3520

1,000 Tons of Sludge

Most residents are aware that our Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) is undergoing what was an estimated \$8,000,000, now potentially \$9,500,000, of upgrades as a result of a consent order signed with the EPA and the State Department of Environmental Protection and the settlement of a lawsuit with the Buzzards Bay Coalition.

Marion has approximately 20 acres of lagoons at Benson Brook, two 5-acre lagoons and one 10-acre lagoon. They are used to hold treated waste and, at times, untreated waste when there are surges due to major rain events that are beyond the WWTP capacity, or when maintenance shuts down the WWTP.

The EPA, DEP, and Buzzards Bay Coalition claimed that waste water from the lagoons was leaching into the ground water and traveling to Sippican Harbor and Aucoot Cove to become a major source of nitrogen pollution. We disagreed with that premise at the time.

The terms of the consent order require the Town to clean out and line 5-acre Lagoon #1, to clean out and go dry with 5-acre Lagoon #2, and to pond (the lagoon going dormant) 10-acre Lagoon #3. The goal is to optimize the use of Lagoon #1 and to use Lagoon #2 only infrequently if Lagoon #1 hits its capacity limits. By lining and optimizing the use of Lagoon #1, the consensus was it would remove a potential source of infiltration into the ground water.

Our contractor now is at the point of removing the sludge at the bottom of Lagoon #1 which has built up in the 50 years of its use. This is an expensive process, because it is treated as hazardous material. Our contract was based on the need to remove an estimated 350 tons of sludge. Based on the work to date, it now is estimated that there may be 800 to 1,000 tons of sludge. The sludge in the bottom of Lagoon #1 is almost 2 feet thick, most with a consistency of peanut butter and the very bottom is solid.

This has two implications. First, removing this additional sludge will cost Marion an estimated \$1.5 million, pushing the cost of the project to \$9.5 million and forcing the Town to borrow more money. Our DPW Superintendent is trying to develop options to mitigate this cost. Second, you

don't have to be a scientist or engineer to conclude that the odds that waste water was making its way through almost two feet of hard sludge (and the hard pan underneath) to pollute the harbor or Aucoot Cove is slim to none. It suggests maybe the whole project was unnecessary.

Given this new development, the State needs to finally step up to help pay for this project. We have been working with Representative Straus for three years to identify a potential funding source. He was successful in getting a line item in the 2018 Environmental Bond Bill providing for up to \$2 million in financial assistance for WWTP lagoon improvements.

Despite our repeated requests, the State has failed in the annual budgeting process to allocate any of this money to Marion. For two years in a row, we were told the first increment of \$500,000 was not available this year but should be next year. Next year, FY 2022, is coming up fast. Now, with the expected \$1,500,000 additional cost for removing the sludge, Marion needs the full \$2 million immediately.

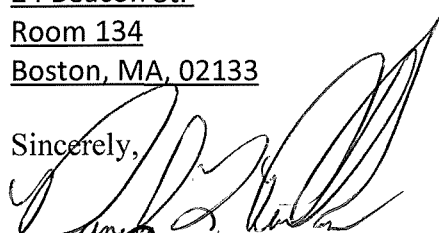
We have tried repeatedly over the past three years to obtain financial support from the State. Each year, they said maybe next year. The State did not respond to our May 27 letter (copy below) to Governor Baker. Recently, we have been in touch with Representative Straus and he has offered a video conference call with the Select Board to discuss the pressing need for financial support for the Sewer Enterprise fund.

In order for Governor Baker and Representative Straus to fully appreciate Marion's pressing need for this \$2 million, we ask that you pick up a pen and write them both again. Please remind the State of the huge burden this estimated \$9,500,000 project imposes on our only 1,700 rate payers. Please enclose a copy of this email with our May 27 letter to Governor Baker.

Below is the address for Representative Straus and a copy of our May 27 letter to Governor Baker, which includes his address.

Representative William M. Straus
State House
24 Beacon St.
Room 134
Boston, MA, 02133

Sincerely,



Randy L. Parker



John P. Waterman



Norman A. Hills



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May 27, 2020

Honorable Charles D. Baker
Governor of the Commonwealth
State House Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Chapter 209 of the Acts of 2018 – Line Item 2200-7022

Dear Governor Baker,

We are aware that the pandemic has required most of your attention and energy; however we hope that you will consider our request.

We are writing to follow up on the February 10, 2020 letter from Representative William Straus to you requesting release of the first \$500,000 tranche of funding for the Town of Marion of the total \$2,000,000 funding provided for as part of the 2018 Environmental Bond Bill. A copy of his letter is enclosed. We also are enclosing a copy of our December 16, 2019 letter to Commissioner Martin Suuberg.

Starting with his filing an amendment to the 2018 Environment Bond Bill for \$2,000,000 of funding for waste water improvement projects in the Buzzards Bay watershed, Representative William Straus has recognized the Town of Marion's pressing need for funding assistance. He has continued to be a strong advocate. The voters of Marion are aware of and very grateful for his efforts.

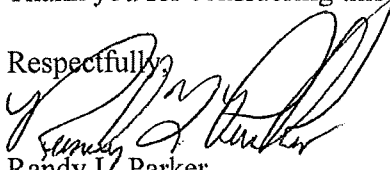
This money is urgently needed by Town of Marion to help fund upgrades to our wastewater treatment plant mandated by the DEP and EPA under consent orders. The total project will cost in excess of \$7,000,000. Servicing the related debt significantly impacts sewer rates and poses an unfair burden on our only 1,700 rate payers. Unfortunately, this cost falls on our residents in

Marion who can least afford to pay it. Our summer residents with the big homes on the harbor remain mostly on septic systems.

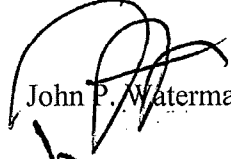
With the support of Senator Pacheco and Representative Straus, we sought this funding in FY2019 and FY2020. Both years we were told the \$500,000 was not available this year but should be next year. Next year, FY2021, is coming up fast, and we hope to inform our ratepayers that they can expect some relief. We urgently need approval of these funds.

Thank you for considering this request.

Respectfully,



Randy V. Parker



John P. Waterman



Norman A. Hills

Cc: Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito
Secretary Kathleen Theoharides
Senator Marc R. Pacheco
Representative William M. Straus
Commissioner Martin Suuberg