Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions are found online at www.voicesandchoices.ca. They are both anticipated questions as well as some of the ones posed by residents. You can ask us questions anytime using the contact information below.

Who is affected by the Central Water System?

The short answer is: Properties within the Village of Chester boundary.

The long answer is: There are a couple of options based on the water source. Depending on the source, certain properties outside the immediate boundary could be included in the service area. The Village of Chester boundary is included in all options, while the "add-on" properties depend on whether the source is groundwater or surface water.

If the central water system passes by my property, will I be forced to connect?

You will not be forced to connect, but if you are within the service area, you are required to pay the capital costs for system installation.

If I own a piece of vacant land which can be serviced by central water, will I be forced to pay even though I am not connecting the property?

If your property is within the service area, you are required to pay for the capital costs associated with constructing the system. You do not have to pay for usage if you are not connected.

If we have central water, will fire hydrants be installed in the service area? If so, will there be a possibility for a decrease in house insurance for the properties in the service area?

The cost of fire protection is included in both estimates; however, the provision of these services has yet to be decided. As of right now, we have been including it in discussions. The Municipality strongly urges residents to call their insurance brokers or providers and ask if there is a reduction in insurance premiums available. The information received so far has varied.

Will my vote impact construction?

The service area will be divided into zones. When you cast your vote, you will be asked to identify in which area you are located. If the Municipality proceeds with installation, this information will determine if there are any "priority" areas and could have a role in which parts of the Village are serviced first. One key area that has been identified already is the "Village T", which is the Pleasant Street/Queen Street section.

Do I need to connect to the Central Water System even if I have a good well?

No, you do not.

If the Central Water System is approved, will I still have to pay if I did not support the proposal?

To make a system affordable, all of the properties within the service area boundary are required to share the capital costs.

Can I get water later if I decide not to connect now?

Absolutely! The design will include connections for all properties in the service area.

What if the provincial and federal governments do not fund this project?

Council would have to reassess, but funding is another integral part of the decision to proceed.

If a central water system was to be introduced to the Village of Chester where would the water be sourced from? The reason for my inquiry is in regards to concerns pertaining to how the water used may affect the well water supply of surrounding properties that would fall outside of the serviced area.

Although nothing has been decided at this stage, two options were identified so far: a surface water source (Spectacle Lake) and a groundwater source in Middle River. This is based on research from engineering firm CBCL.With regards to the concerns of impacts to surrounding properties, that is certainly a valid concern and is something that we plan to investigate once it is determined if we are proceeding with a central water system.

You've said "With regards to the concerns of impacts to surrounding properties, that is certainly a valid concern and is something that we plan to investigate once it is determined if we are proceeding with a central water system." My concern then is how can one make an informed decision and vote on a central water system if the potential impacts are not being investigated until after a decision to proceed is made?

We acknowledge that this issue is not an easy one to vote on, and while the Municipality is providing all the information it can at this time, there are still many unknowns. There would be a significant investment required in terms of design to determine those unknowns. It is difficult to expend those funds without knowing the level of public support, certainly the chicken or the eggs situation. What I can say, that if the decision is to proceed with the project, there are still many steps to seeing it through to completion, and that with each step or decision to be made, the advantages and disadvantages (i.e. potential impacts) will be discussed and evaluated. Any potential impacts encountered, the Municipality will endeavor to eliminate or if need be mitigate those impacts to its residents. It is not our intent to solve a problem by creating another!

MODC should be showing leadership and do the right thing for the Village of Chester. We know good water is a basic right and many residents of the village do not have this. Why are we voting on something this basic that everyone needs and deserves. MODC should get on with it even if we start small and add on as time goes by. The residents have never been asked to vote on any large project taken on by MODC in the past.

Because constructing a central water system has serious financial implications to property owners in the Village, feedback is important before determining whether to proceed or not. Council is hoping to get that feedback through the poll.

Does MODC have a reserve fund for water or any other infrastructure project for the Village or elsewhere?

The Municipality does not have a reserve fund set up for central water for the Village of Chester. We have reserves, totaling $11.9 million dollars, for various other existing municipal infrastructure, such as central sewer. Details of these reserves and infrastructure can be found in our audited financial statements.

As clean drinking water is a human right please advise of the MODC capital plan for potable water for the Village of Chester and elsewhere going forward?

The Municipality has included the proposed central water system for the Village of Chester in its 10-year capital plan since the 2017-2018 fiscal year, with $500,000 allocated in 2018-2019, $500,000 allocated in 2019-2020, $2,750,00 allocated in 2020-2021, and $2,750,000 allocated in 2021-2022. These funding allocations are based on previous reports and funding from other levels of government. The allocations are subject to change if we move forward with the project and a detailed design is completed.

Have options for pro-rating been considered, since it is likely to cost less per property to distribute among smaller-sized lots (closer together = shorter runs)?

Not at this point – it is a fixed amount per property. The same cost per property is proposed, no matter the size.

What if the $2,564 is not paid by who can't afford to pay, plus annual fee, plus taxes, plus $1,609 financing?

This will be included in regulations: payment arrangements or disconnection.

Is it the business district asking for this? The "T"?

A lot of the business district has water problems, but so do homes in the Village core and boundary.

1990 – H2O has iron and manganese 2009 – H2O in Spectacle Lake does also.

The CBCL report indicates that this has been common since 1967 and felt that Spectacle Lake was a typical water source. More testing will be completed on quality prior to design, which would have to meet Canadian Drinking water regulations.

1993 – 59% of residents said NO – Council continued to buy land – WHY?

This issue was still being discussed in 1997, and beyond. Council was preparing for the future, if water was needed.

Has land acquisition on Spectacle Lake been factored as an asset towards the system?

It is not factored in price of land so far. With regards to the future, there has been no discussion. Properties bought and paid for are through the general tax rate, and not toward the cost of the utility. If we do not proceed, the properties will be discussed.

The mailout received by residents refers to $48 Million. He believes that number is bogus. It will be shared among property owners; none of the municipal, provincial, federal properties are factored in. Will the amount of money be shared with all? It could be a significant decrease in overall cost.

Refer to the list of municipal properties posted on Voices and Choices in an earlier response to this question/statement. There has been no discussion of exempting government, and they have been factored in the costs. It was felt that levels of government should not to be included in poll.

Concerning apartments, will it cost $2,500 to connect one building? What about apartments with many hookups?

Currently they are being treated as one connection – one line from road to building. The building owner would be billed. Matt looks at cost three ways: main, connection, and usage. Larger users could have different type/size meter.

For those who hook up and have wells, what happens to wells on those properties? Is there a cost of filling in the wells once central water is hooked up?

Yes, if abandoned, the owner has to follow regulations and fill the well. The cost for doing that is not factored in the costs presented as that is the landowner's responsibility.

The Village does need a water supply, but can we all afford it? He didn't realize there were so many PID numbers in the Village. Are they big enough to build a home on? A lot of votes – a lot of tax? If homes are built on the properties, what about the extra load on the sewer system? If it is going to bankrupt some and chase out older residents, do we need to do that?

There are 1100 taxable accounts. Once a water system is installed, regulations around lot size could change. As far as sewer, the entire proposed area is not serviced with sewer, only various areas. That being said, we are looking at Wastewater Treatment Plant design and possible expansion. Regardless of water, there is always the demand for wastewater.

Has the calculation for a lump sum payment of capital charges been made?

This hasn't been discussed, but it could be a possibility.

Have sites be identified for the plant for Spectacle Lake / Middle River?

Sites have been selected over time. The current design (preliminary) identifies lots near the lake to be used. Middle River sites are not defined as the hydrogeological assessment did not point out a specific property. The Municipality has land in that area, and we would use what we have.

Which properties are not eligible?

Water lots without a structure, and properties owned by the Municipality, Village Commission, and Province.

If they are going to get water why aren't they paying the capital charges?

When the cost estimate was done, the expectation was that anyone who can connect will pay. Government agencies will not vote, but they will pay.

Being aware of our demographics, affordable housing is important, and rent is charged according to income. How will a central water system affect future affordable housing that we need in our community? If rent increases, it may be a negative for those seeking affordable housing.

We don't know right now. If don't have answers, we will find them.

What percentage of votes are required to make this happen?

Council will use the information from the poll to guide their decision. They want to be clear that the Village does/does not want water.

The price of infrastructure projects is never on budget. Has there been any consideration of the escalating costs for this project and how will it be mitigated?

The estimates used in the calculations have factored in inflation. Contingencies are also included, which would help mitigate the unknowns. The estimates are also Class D, which could be 30% higher or 20% less. If the design work proceeds, it will provide a more accurate estimate.

Is 75% government funding 100% guaranteed?

The percentage funded is locked in for an ICIP application, but may not be 75% - it is 73% if we are successful. If we can't get the funding, we will be responsible for the balance.

Is the Municipal Government included in the 75% of government funding?

No, that is provincial and federal.

Could the Municipality contribute the remaining?

Under the Municipal Government Act, municipalities have the power to spend money for a water supply. It would be council's decision.

Can money from reserves be used?

It is possible, but it was not factored in the numbers handed out. That would be determined by Council.

In 2011, Spectacle Lake was considered as a water source, and the estimate was $13 Million. She is in favour of a water system. How can the cost have increased so much since 2011?

That amount was from a KVM report estimate. The reasons for the difference is 1) that the scope of work is not the same as it only included areas serviced by sewer; and 2) the figure used did not include HST. In 2016, the previous Councillor asked for an estimate on a water system, and staff took that number and escalated it to represent current pricing.

Vote on January 26 – at this point, you don't know the percentage of the vote required to make the water utility a go. What about after vote?

If results indicate no, nothing happens. The project does not proceed. If results indicate yes, a pre-design is required. More information will be available. Grants from other levels of government will be available later.

Experience with government projects is that the estimates are over. The Class D estimate is very broad. Who is on the hook for the addition costs? If the government will fund 75%, as a resident, we are doubling our cost for the project.

We have only been provided a Class D. If it is decided to proceed, more design has to happen. The A estimate is a tender estimate plus/minus 10%. That would be used in the funding application.

Should the vote be to go with a Class A estimate? In favour or not to proceed with design? We need a better idea of cost, but at what cost?

If Council wishes to proceed, $1.7 Million is required for the design.

It makes sense that if a big trench is dug for a water system, can we look at putting sewer in at the same time? Is a poll as to whether we want to proceed? If Council is going to ignore it, why not pay for it?

The Municipality is looking at expansion of the Chester Wastewater Treatment Plant. If there is the ability to expand, then Council can direct staff to determine where the capacity can go.

Under NS Law, it is the Municipality who is responsible for safe drinking water systems within its jurisdiction. She agreed with the comment on affordable housing. The issue is housing without drinking water is not affordable. The responsibility of the Municipality to determine how much money they are willing to put into a water system.

Municipalities have the power to put money into a water system, but there is no direction to do so at this time. We have power, but we are not mandated [directed to by law].

The interest is a substantial of portion to be paid; how secure is the interest rate for the term of the debt?

We used calculations from CBCL, but we believe that the interest rate when it comes time to borrow may be less than the CBCL report. They may have estimated higher.

Has Council considered health concerns? A sewer break shut down a large area in Chester. Are they factoring in the other issues, such as minerals and other contamination?

Council is taking their time and considering all aspects. Malcolm Pitman – The driving force of this project is the reliable source of clean drinking water.

Do we know before we vote that there will be Provincial and Federal funding?

No. The application for funding will only happen after a detailed design can be provided. There is no guarantee that the application will be successful. It hasn't been determined what will be a successful poll (ie percentage of vote).

We are voting on whether to construct. The vote will depend on what people expect they will have to pay. At this time there is not sufficient information on what the costs will be. Someone may vote no because they are unsure of what it will be for them. Indicate in the question that there will be a second poll. May get "no" because people don't know what they are voting for.

This was seen as a vote to proceed for a predesign for a solid Class A estimate so people know what they are getting into.

How are we reaching those who don't live here year round?

Contact Municipal Clerk to get information on how to vote/get their letter.

We have a water system at Chandlers Cove. Are we expected to contribute to capital costs for a water system that we have already incurred capital costs to do?

Yes, Chandlers Cove is in the service area.

There are two schools in the Village. Only 7% come from within the service area. That means 93% are outside of the Village who go to schools. Considering that, are those people in the outside districts being charged a water fee or tax of an amount annually to pay for the children who will use the water at school?

Indirectly, we would charge the Centre for Education. The Province and municipalities currently fund centres for education.

THE MUNICIPALITY OF CHESTER

Contact us...

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