

Report on the April 11 Barnstable Town Council PFAS workshop

David Churbuck, commissioner

Craig Crocker and a COMM commissioner whose name escapes me (I think it was Peter Hansen) confirmed what John Beling the MassDEP deputy commissioner said early in the evening, that considering the new EPA limits, COMM is one of 90 PWS in Massachusetts violation of the new standard.

I assume Cotuit is not one of those 90, but I'd like to confirm we are not in violation and learn where we stand relative to the new standard and whether our situation makes treatment a more urgent priority than it has been in the past.

I'm not clear when we expect to ask the district to fund a water treatment plant, and what we need to do to update the Tata & Howard study to reflect the cost of PFAS treatment, the cost to connect Station 5 should it ever need treatment, and if we should have a warrant item asking the district to fund an update to that study given that it is now 5 years old and may need revision due to higher costs and the possible need to include a carbon PFAS filtration system.

Craig Crocker, the COMM superintendent discussed their treatment plant plans but didn't get into much detail about the three wells in violation of the new EPA PFAS standard. We need to confirm their location, but I don't believe any of the stations are located in the Hayden well field.

COMM was thanked for helping Hyannis (Barnstable Water Company) when they needed to buy water due to the PFAS contamination and closure of the Mary Dunn and Maher wells. Hyannis has spent \$3 million on water, and Yarmouth's rates were at least 3x more than COMM. The council thanked COMM for being a good neighbor.

There was some discussion about sharing water treatment infrastructure between COMM and Hyannis. Hans Keijser, supervisor of the DPW water supply division said a shared treatment plant was highly unlikely given state regulations prohibiting commingling of raw water between two public water suppliers. He said from an engineering standpoint, shared treatment infrastructure would require a big expansion of the treatment facility planned for Straightway, and that it made little

sense to build a plant that could somehow keep two different raw sources separated, treated, and returned to their respective water district without violating the regs. Craig Crocker, superintendent of COMM, also said the engineering challenge would be huge.

Consolidation is definitely on the mind of the council but I believe Dan Santos and Mark Ells and the various districts are opposed to the idea of tying all the pieces together in one big municipal water company. The town is scrambling to pay for the sewer extension, and the clean up in Hyannis at the fire fighting academy and airport has been expensive and they councilors are concerned about the impact on Hyannis water rates and resident health concerns.

COMM expressed frustration at trying to get grant money to help pay for treatment, especially the ARPA funds the federal government made available during the pandemic. Ells took the microphone and discussed helping the districts tap into various sources at the state and federal level.

I believe some sort of meeting of the town's various water districts needs to happen on a regular basis to share knowledge and figure out ways to band together when seeking grants or zero percent loans to fund treatment and upgrades.

As for my presentation of Cotuit's PFAS exposure and treatment plans. I started with a disclaimer that I was the "freshman commissioner" and explained why Chris Wiseman was unable to join the presentation due to a family emergency. As it was very late, I gave the council a very brief summary of the situation:

Since testing began there have been no violations of the MassDEP 20 ng/l mcl in Cotuit, and we have had minor detections in stations 1-4, none in station 5, have water treatment in our capital budget and the Tata & Howard report in hand with cost estimates for a manganese, iron treatment plant that may need to be revisited. I informed them about the Sole Source hydrological study that was commissioned to study pumping impacts on Little River, and that it gave us a more accurate idea of the upgradient flows for stations 1-4. I said we are confident our exposure to any plumes from Joint Base Cape Cod are minimal as the closest detection in Mashpee is several miles west at the Quashnet River. I said our best guess about PFAS sources in Cotuit is upgradient septic or surface water contamination anywhere in the general upgradient flow. I expressed my concern over the condition of Santuit Pond and the proximity of title 5 septic systems to the Sampsons Mill well field, but that exposure to fire fighting foam at Joint Base Cape Cod isn't a concern and in lieu

of an obvious point source, the water department assumes our detected hits at Stations 1-4, originate from septic systems falling within the zones of contribution mapped out by the Sole Source study.

I told the council we are meeting with the civic association to brief the village on the upcoming warrant article seeking district approval to amend the enabling legislation that would permit the district to work with private property owners on source protection measures, including, potentially, I/A “nitro” septic systems on a model similar to what the Barnstable Clean Water Coalition is doing around Shubael's Pond. That was received enthusiastically, but I added the disclaimer that we don't know if I/A septic will do anything to mitigate septic PFAS sources but given the CWMP's forecast that municipal sewer won't reach Cotuit for ten to 20 years, that the BOWC believe any “ounce of prevention” made now will avoid the proverbial “pound of cure” in the future and said our warrant article and source protection plan will give us the ability to try new solutions to protect water quality. There was some interest expressed by the council to look at title 5 septic sources and in general, encouragement to keep pushing source protection and continue to be the district trying new solutions. Research studies by the Silent Spring Institute have identified septic systems as PFAS sources and have correlated high nitrate levels with high PFAS levels.

The council offered its encouragement to keep up the good work in Cotuit, and acknowledged that Cotuit's water conservation efforts that reduced year over year water usage by 17% through the new irrigation policy and water rates are examples the other districts should follow.