

http://www.heraldsun.com/the_chapel_hill_herald/rogers-road-sewer-plan-reaction-mixed/article_ff72c2e1-4c76-50ed-bb63-0fb57984ad54.html

Rogers Road sewer plan reaction mixed

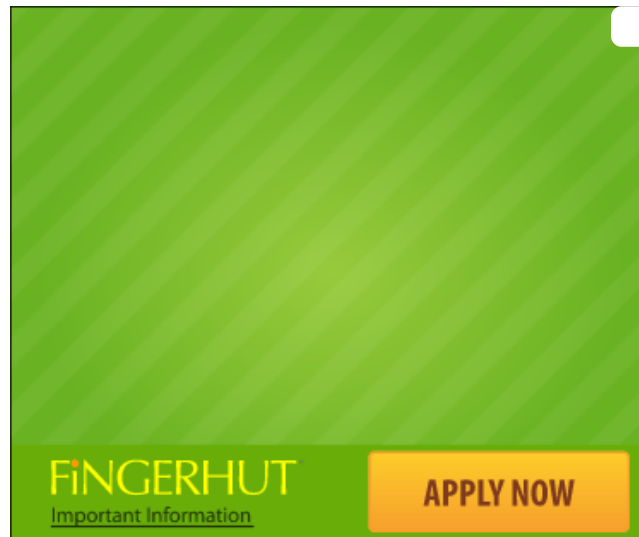
Katie Jansen

Herald-Sun Aug 1, 2015

Long-awaited plans for a Rogers Road sewer system received both praise and criticism Tuesday evening.

The plan drafted by OWASA, which estimates the project cost at \$5.8 million, will bring sewer service to 86 parcels in the historic neighborhood.

The fight for sewer service and other “basic amenities” has been a long one, said Robert Campbell, president of the Rogers-Eubanks Neighborhood Association.



He said Orange County and the towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro have made promises to the neighborhood that have gone unfulfilled for more than 40 years.

But some property owners still weren't pleased with the plan when they saw their properties weren't included in the 86 parcels, which qualify for waived connection and installation fees as long as the households meet criteria for a low-to-moderate income bracket, said Judy Johnson, senior planner for the town of Chapel Hill. The government will also pay the costs of these homes abandoning their septic tanks, she said.

Johnson said that elected officials from the county and both municipalities sat on a Rogers Road Neighborhood Task Force and chose the 86 parcels that would receive this discounted sewer service, although she could not offer any further explanation about how the parcels were chosen. The final report from the task force was issued in 2013.

Residents included in the 86 parcels, if they choose to opt in to sewer service, will still have to pay a monthly sewer bill. Some residents not included in the 86 parcels will have the sewer line running through their properties — but if they want sewer, they will have to pay to connect on their own dime.

Jeremy Fireline, an OWASA engineer, said there was no way to estimate these costs, citing elevation and width of laterals as factors that could vary greatly on each property. Johnson guessed that hookup and installation fees could run from \$10,000 to \$15,000.

Johnson also said that 30 to 35 lots of the original 86 lots are now unoccupied or vacant but will be included in the sewer project. She said that the designated parcels could not be reconfigured unless the Rogers Road Neighborhood Task Force met again to issue another report.

Fireline introduced plans for the project in the Rogers-Eubanks Neighborhood Association Community Center in front of an audience of community members, elected officials and town staff.

He said this project was especially fulfilling to him because of the history associated with the Rogers Road community.

Engineers have already completed a preliminary engineering study and are ready to begin the preliminary design phase as early as next week, Fireline said. Residents can expect to see more detailed surveying, which will include markers on trees and engineers coming door-to-door to speak with property owners.

Fireline emphasized the importance of communication between OWASA and Rogers Road residents. In order to lay pipe, Orange County and OWASA will have to work together to obtain easements, or permission from property owners to lay pipe on their land.

Easements are typically 30 feet wide, Fireline said. Property owners would have to agree not only to permit OWASA to dig, but would also have to agree to not plant anything on the land that would interfere with sewer line maintenance.



The preliminary design phase will take about three months, he said.

OWASA is still weighing two design options: an all gravity sewer and a pump station option. A pump station sewer requires more maintenance, such as backup generators, because it must pump water to the top of an incline rather than allowing water to flow naturally downhill. A pump station sewer would also take about 15 months to design, as compared to 11 months for an all gravity sewer.

After the final design is complete, a bidding process for a contractor would take about three to four months, Fireline said. From there, construction will last 10 to 16 months, depending on which sewer option is chosen.

Campbell expressed concern about the pump station delaying the process and suggested that it would be beneficial to move forward with a gravity sewer and let a private developer worry about a pump station in the future.

Some questioned where the money from the project would come from. Fireline said that the county and the municipalities are working on a partnership funding agreement.

When someone asked whether the sewer project could appear as a bond item, several elected officials present shook their heads.

“This has gone on too long,” said Orange County Commissioner Renee Price. “Cost effective and time is what we’re after.”

