

Vassalboro Sewer District background information

Sourced from Vassalboro Select Board meeting Minutes (2011 – 2023)

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Vassalboro Sewer District

- **August 18, 2011** - Ladd Dam belongs to the Sanitary District – (Source SB Minute)
- **April 23, 2015**
 - On Article 25, Chairman Haines requested that a note be added to the article to provide clarification that the CDBG grant would be used for the Sanitary District Sewer Project. Community Development Block Grant. <https://www.maine.gov/decd/community-development/cdbg-program>

1292	Vassalboro (7)	1984	PG	5,000	2,052,417	
1293	Vassalboro	1987	CR	384,562		
1294	Vassalboro	1989	CR	400,000		
1295	Vassalboro	1992	DF	107,000		Durathern
1296	Vassalboro	2002	EDI	30,855		3-phase power for DP Industries
1297	Vassalboro	2012	BA	150,000		DP Industries, Inc.
1298	Vassalboro	2018	PI	975,000		Construct 2 new pumps stations - rehab 3 existing ones

- **September 10, 2015**
 - VSD submitted an application for **\$60,000** in funding from the TIF Program Fund - A motion was then made by L. Titus to approve the request for \$60,000 in funding for the Sanitary District sewer main project from the TIF project fund. Chairman Haines seconded the motion, and it was voted unanimously by the Board.
 - sewer main project is projected to cost **\$5.5 million dollars**

- **April 7, 2016**
 - town received an app for funding from TIF fund (VSD), which is approved project for use TIF funds. The VSD seeking **\$145K** public hearing will need to be advertised. funds would be used for engineering costs
- **May 5, 2016 - Public Hearing for TIF Funding Application from Vassalboro Sanitary District (VSD)**
 - Board voted unanimously to grant \$145,000 to the Vassalboro Sanitary District.
- **October 19, 2017** - Chairman Titus provided an update on the well-attended **Sanitary District public hearing** he attended on 10/17/17. NFI
- **November 16, 2017**
 - Sabins informed the Board that representatives from **FEMA and MEMA** came to the office today to collect data on expenses the town and sanitary district incurred during the recent severe wind storm. Federal financial assistance in the form of reimbursement of expenses during this storm may become available in the future.
- **January 11, 2018**
 - **CDBG Letter of Intent** – With little discussion, and on a motion made by J. Melrose, seconded by R. Browne, the Board voted unanimously to approve and execute the CDBG Letter of Intent to apply for funding in the upcoming grant round. This grant application will help the Sanitary District to pay for their planned sewer main project.
- **May 31, 2018**
 - asking for the entire amount of TIF funds available (**\$111,628.92**)
 - Selectman Browne stated that he would prefer to leave something in the fund - Board voted unanimously to award **\$91,628.92**

- **March 21, 2019 - Sewer project funding**

- Chairman Titus explained result of VSD's public hearing on rate increase, member of the public asked for town's help thru taxation to relieve burden on the users. Chairman asked for subject placed on agenda for public notice and discussion.
- Titus explained the origin of the TIF Fund & authorized uses includes contributions to the VSD's new sewer line. Several contributions from the TIF fund have already been granted = **\$290K**
- The Board expects more annual grants may be gifted to pay back loans on the project, but commitments could not be made now on what action future members on the SB may take.
- Issue could be placed on annual town meeting warrant voluntarily by the SB, or could be forced on warrant by petition collecting 211 registered signatures. The signed petition would then be submitted to the SB.
- Chairman Titus restated his position he was not in favor of asking the town to contribute tax money toward this project. A question and answer session with residents at the meeting, several of whom stated they were considering selling their home because the sewer bill will be higher than the taxes.
- Addition reporting Town Line - <https://townline.org/selectmen-discuss-proposed-sewer-fee-increase-with-residents/>

- **April 18, 2019**

- The use of our TIF money was briefly discussed, as well as a brief inquiry if the Sanitary District has received any news on whether they qualified for grant money from the State for their current sewer project. The speculation was that news had been received, but the funding grant amount (about \$300K) was much lower than hoped for.

- **May 31, 2019 -TIF Public Hearing**

- comments on the application for TIF grant funding received VSD. Sanitary District President Ray Breton explained that they were asking for the entire amount of TIF funds available (\$111,628.92) because they need the money to pay for the new sewer line project. They are using operational money to pay for project expenses now, because other grant funds have been depleted. The Town and the Sanitary District have just been notified that **\$975K in CDBG grant funds have been approved but it will be a while before any funds will be received.** Discussion was given to clarify that the TIF money will be used by the District for the new sewer line project as required by the approved TIF Development Plan, and not for operational costs. The Sanitary District Trustees confirmed that is their plan. Selectman Browne stated that he would prefer to leave something in the fund, rather than spend it completely, to which Selectman Melrose agreed. After Chairman Titus closed the public hearing at 7:20 p.m., and on a motion made by R. Browne, seconded by J. Melrose, the **Board voted unanimously to award \$91,628.92 to the Vassalboro Sanitary District** for their sewer project from the TIF Development Fund.
- Total cost est. more than \$7 mil (Source: Town Line <https://townline.org/vassalboro-selectmen-agree-to-give-sanitary-district-tif-funds/>)

- Town Line - **VASSALBORO: Money is topic at selectmen's meeting** (May 31, 2019, meeting)
 - <https://townline.org/vassalboro-money-is-topic-at-selectmens-meeting/>
 - Planned costs for the connection total \$7.768 million, but Green hopes it will come in under budget. The money will come from federal and state grants and loans and from Vassalboro's TIF fund. Green's budget showed \$290,000 in TIF money already granted and, he said, mostly spent.
 - Green said the plan for the future is to use town money for three purposes:
 - Helping homeowners who will now have the sewer line available pay the estimated average \$5,000 to connect to it, including running a pipe from the street to the house and rearranging internal plumbing;
 - Providing the reserve fund required by one of the federal loans; and
 - Creating an annuity account to help offset debt service costs.

- **July 18, 2019 TIF Funding request from Vassalboro Sanitary District (revisited from 6/13/19)**
 - The Sanitary District Trustees and Engineer Richard Green attended the meeting to explain their budget and funding report that was prepared by Mr. Green on behalf of the District at the request of the Selectmen at the June 13th public hearing on the request for TIF grant funding from the Project Development Fund.
 - Average is \$5K / household to hook into the new system, and the district wants to help as many homeowners as possible to hook into the system.
 - J. Melrose prefers a comprehensive understanding as to TIF funding assistance that will be requested from the town going forward. He wants a long term plan, rather than a year-by-year decision to be made by the Board. He wants to focus on the District's debt service payment for the sewer project, rather than subsidizing operations and maintenance costs going forward. Based on his interpretation of the information in the budget report, J. Melrose suggested funding the Sanitary District's request at \$84K, stating he could not support the full request of \$120K. Both Chairman Titus and Selectman Browne stated they could support the request for \$120K. Selectman Browne stated he would prefer to consider the funding requests each year individually, rather than locking into a plan, because circumstances change. Mr. Green offered that the District could come back next year with a better, more defined business plan. Selectman Browne suggested splitting the difference and awarding \$100K to the district. Chairman Titus stated that he agrees conceptually with Selectman Melrose, but he wants relief now to district customers. On a motion made by Chairman Titus, seconded by R. Browne, the **Board voted two in favor, one opposed (Melrose) to award \$100K from the TIF District Funds to the Sanitary District.**

- **February 11, 2020 - TIF fund distribution public hearing**

- TIF funds to help new users hook up to the new sewer line? background info on Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) approval of the TIF Development Plan and the projects approved in the plan for the use of the funds. (more info <https://www.maine.gov/decd/MTIF>)
- Selectmen have attempted to divvy up the TIF funds -fish and sewer projects. J. Melrose expressed reservation about making TIF grant awards piecemeal without seeing the whole picture of how much is needed for both the sewer and the fish projects. Chairman Titus stated that a plan has been requested from the VSD in the past but no commitment has been received on a plan of action from them. The Select Board would like to make a plan so as to commit a certain dollar amount of TIF funds for each entity per year, so that other town projects could potentially be funded as well.
- J. Melrose suggested that instead of using TIF funds for the fishway project, a Revenue Bond could be sought using anticipated alewife harvest revenue funds to make the bond payment. After discussion and by unanimous consent, the Board agreed to not approve the request for TIF funding at this time.
- Sabins was instructed to ask the VSD to submit within 4-6 weeks a concrete plan of how much TIF money going forward will be needed for new customer hookups and/or debt payoff, along with a report of how the last TIF grant of **\$100K** was spent. This topic and a decision on the requested funds will be revisited at a later time.
- “Several residents, mostly from North Vassalboro, expressed concern that dam work would use up all the money available for 2020-21. They want the VSD to get a share, especially to assist residents who will now have access to the public sewer to hook on.” Source: Town line <https://townline.org/vassalboro-selectmen-discuss-tif-spending-for-next-year/>

- **March 5, 2020 - TIF Funding Requests**

- Chairman Titus recognized the fact that the Sanitary District has recently submitted an application seeking **\$166K** in TIF funding for the sewer project, but that a public hearing must be held at a future meeting before a decision can be made on that application.
- product is now flowing to Winslow, so the district is paying to run two systems since the new system is not yet running at full capacity - district needs to start payments of \$72K this year for one of the project loans - TIF funding will go toward the project payments and will also assist to reduce user hookup charges
- Selectman Melrose offered an alternative method for funding the sewer project payments. His proposed method would help the town schedule the use of TIF funds to the district going forward. Mr. Green seemed receptive to the proposed method, but additional consideration needs to be given to the idea before the next meeting and public hearing.
- After hearing the financial needs of the Sanitary District, Landis offered to provide help to the District with grant funding information, since grant work is a major part of her job responsibility and she has some knowledge that may be helpful to them.
- Chairman Titus reiterated a point that Selectman Melrose had made to him earlier in the meeting: The Sanitary District plans to use some of the TIF funds to assist the public with sewer hook-up costs and is there a concern that it may violate State law which prohibits the use of public funds for private use? Clarification from the town attorney is needed before funding decisions can be made.

- **April 2, 2020**

- Sabins explained that there is currently \$166,930 in the TIF fund.
- The sewer people say they need a minimum of \$72,265 by July to make a loan payment.”
- The TIF fund distribution for the Sanitary District’s sewer project will be discussed and potentially approved once a public hearing can be held as required by our TIF Development Plan. A public hearing cannot be held using the current remote video conferencing meeting arrangements, as live public comments cannot be received.

- **April 30, 2020**

- Vassalboro Sanitary District Trustee Lee Trahan stated that he was not certain that the Sanitary District is ready to make a commitment to participate in this Power Purchase Agreement. More discussion is needed by the Trustees at a future meeting.

- **June 11, 2020**

- Motion was made by L. Titus to approve the VSD application for \$166K but to provide \$72,265 for the district’s immediate need now with the balance to be paid in the next fiscal year as funds become available. The motion was seconded by R. Browne, and further discussion ensued.
- J. Melrose expressed concern that the VSD’s original application requests TIF funds to pay user hook-up fees, and that the Selectmen have approved an application that contains an unpermitted action. Chairman Titus then amended his motion to include that the TIF funds will be used for debt relief for the Sanitary District, not for use on personal private property.
- J. Melrose expressed concern still about the \$100K previously gifted. Chairman Titus stated he would like to let future Boards deal with making a plan. The amended motion was seconded by R. Browne and voted unanimously by the Board.

- **September 3, 2020 - Public Hearing – TIF Distribution**

- Engineer Richard Green stated the sewer main project is pretty much done & in operation.
- VSD has to pay bills now and they continue to seek TIF funding for financial relief.
- There are still another 11 or 12 people to hook into the system, which will help with revenue, and Duratherm Window has already hooked into the system about a month ago.
- Mike Vashon asked if further grant funding was available to help pay down the debt. **Richard answered that no further grant funding will be available to the district going forward.**
- The sewer district has both a 30-year loan and a 40-year loan with annual payments that will need to be paid. Vashon asked if the town will help private citizens with septic system replacements. It was explained that this would not be an approved use of TIF funding.
- After discussion and on a motion made by R. Browne, seconded by B. Redmond, the Board voted at 6:41 pm to close the public hearing. R. Browne moved approval of giving \$60K to Maine Rivers from the TIF Development Fund for the Alewife Restoration Project.
- R. Browne moved to approve **a gift of \$50K** from the TIF Development Fund for the Sanitary District, and to leave a balance of \$10,245 in the fund. The motion was seconded by B. Redmond and voted unanimously by the Board.
- The VSD is repaying two loans – 1. \$37K /yr for 30 years 2. \$72K / year for 40 years (Source: Town Line)

- **August 12, 2021 -Use of American Recovery Plan (ARP) funds**
 - On a motion made by C. French, seconded by B. Redmond, the Board voted to table discussion on this topic tonight due to the length of the agenda.
 - Sabins suggested to Chairman Brown that members of the Sanitary District Board of Trustees and their Engineer were present in the audience to share ideas with the Board on this topic. Chairman Brown then recognized Engineer Richard Green and allowed him to speak. Richard stated that he could provide a list of projects that the sewer district could use the ARP funds for as provided in the Federal guidelines. Richard will provide the list of projects to Sabins for discussion at a future meeting. Chairman Browne agreed to that plan, stating the goal is to keep the Vassalboro Sanitary District in a sound position so they can stand on their own. The topic will be placed on the September 2nd and/or 16th meeting agenda.
- **September 2, 2021 - America Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) fund usage**
 - – The Board reviewed list of projects VSD could use the ARPA funds for, totaling **over \$2.2 million dollars**.
 - C. French stated that originally there was no discussion about the VSD needs, but more about the use of the federal ARPA funds for broadband infrastructure investment. C. French indicated he is also interested in having the town make a donation to Delta Ambulance to provide hazard pay to their employees who are enduring the pandemic on a daily basis. He is concerned Delta may lose employees due to the vaccine mandate for all healthcare workers dictated by the State. C. French stated he is interested in using the ARPA funds for Broadband improvement and a contribution to Delta. Delta relies heavily on billable calls that have dwindled since Waterville and Winslow have recently begun ambulance transport services. Vassalboro relies on Delta to transport our residents who are in need of medical assistance. B. Redmond offered that she felt the State would take the lead on Broadband expansion. No decision on how to spend our ARPA funds was made this evening; the topic will be discussed again at a future meeting.

- **January 20, 2022 - ARPA funding usage**

- Also mentioned was possible usage for hazard pay for staff and emergency volunteers, as well as the Sanitary District's request for funds.
- funding discussed for hazard pay for FD, Transfer station, 1st responders. No further VSD discussion

- **March 2, 2022 -Special Meeting to discuss use of ARPA Funds**

- The total amount the town will receive over a two-year period is just over \$461K, of which the town has already received \$231,692.56. The other half of the funds is expected to arrive in late summer 2022 or early fall.
- **Sanitary District requests** – Engineer Richard Green -Fixing the manholes top priority. The manholes are starting to fail. 72 manholes -cost estimate \$3,500 per manhole (~ \$250K)
- C. French asked about district funds that are available for this project. R. Green stated the district could borrow the funds, but prefers not to. R. Green also stated that the pump stations need upgrades in the odor control chemical storage, the trim on the District building is deteriorating and needs replacement, the District building road needs paving, and a water source to wash down the pump stations is also needed. The District would also like sewer extensions to add users to the system to increase their revenue. Chairman Browne stated that he liked the idea of manhole reconstruction and asked how many manholes there are on Rt. #32. R. Green answered about 30 manholes. The district wants to put the manhole work out to bid soon. Chairman Browne reminded all that the ARPA expenditures need to be approved by the voters at town meeting, to which R. Green responded that it takes approximately two months to award a contract.
- Additional reporting Town Line <https://townline.org/arpa-funding-topic-at-special-meeting/>

- **April 14, 2022**

- After lengthy discussion, and on a motion made by B. Redmond, seconded by C. French, the Board voted unanimously to spend most of the first round of ARPA funds as follows: Fire Department – up to \$100K for SCBA packs and related equipment; First Responders – up to \$41K for replacement AED's, N95 Masks, Personal Protective Equipment, and training; ~~and a related mask fitting/testing device~~; and Vassalboro Sanitary District - \$75K for manhole repair.

- **June 22, 2023** - Discuss Sanitary District Meeting
 - The Town Manger explained the sanitary district public hearing last Thursday to discuss a rate increase. Residents were vocal about their concerns about this increase, which has been attributed to the **Town of Winslow raising rates 25%**; two pump stations that require to be pumped out prior to repairs due to pumps getting clogged with hair, grease and clothing. After listening to the customers, the Board of Trustees Thursday voted to keep the sewer prices as they are for this quarter's billing which will be mailed the first week in July. They expect to discuss increasing rates with the October billing, he said.
 - VSD audit, does not have a sufficient unrestricted net position to sustain government operations for a period of at least three months or maintain significant reserve accounts for future capital and program needs.
 - The Town Manager also met with the Sanitary District regarding DOT paving the north end. According to a representative of DOT, it is expected to **cost approximately \$1,500 to match the grade for each manhole cover**. There are three that will need to be addressed this year. More paving is expected next year, he said.
 - French asked whether the Sanitary District has any other position other than a rate increase. B. Goodrich said that the Sanitary District **owes about \$3.1 million in loan payments**. She has a call into Maine Rural Water Association and will meet in July however there doesn't seem to be any funding available. Ray Breton added that the systems were previously failing and the state required the district to update the system or get fined.
 - The selectboard will revisit the issue and the Town Manager will reach out to legislators and follow up.
 - Separate topic - Review ARPA Fund Balance – The Town Manager presented a spreadsheet showing \$107,000 balance as of June 16, 2023

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- **July 13, 2023**

- The Town Manager reported he has been in contact with Rep. Dick Bradstreet regarding some of the challenges faced by the sanitary district. The State Representative contacted Kennebec Sanitary Treatment District's Nick Champagne for guidance. A. Miller reported that Champagne was not aware of any current program other than State Revolving Loan funds to supplement capital projects, however there is help available for people to assist with water utility payments through the Maine House Authority. The Town Manager will meet with the Winslow Town Manager.

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