

TOWN COUNCIL

STAFF REPORT Finance Department



MEETING DATE:	January 10, 2023
PROJECT:	Consideration of a Resolution in Support of an Intergovernmental Agreement with Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority and Beaufort County to Equally Share in the Costs to Transition Connections from Septic to Sewer in the Stoney Creek Watershed
PROJECT MANAGER:	Chris Forster, Assistant Town Manager

RECOMMENDATION:

Town Staff recommends that Town Council approve signing an intergovernmental agreement among the Town of Bluffton ("the Town"), Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority ("BJWSA") and Beaufort County ("the County") (collectively referred to as "the Parties") to equally share costs to transition connections in the Stoney Creek watershed from septic systems to a new sewer system.

BACKGROUND:

There are approximately 150 residences in the Stoney Creek watershed area that are on septic systems. Water monitoring in the area shows chronic leaks from area septic tanks that are emitting fecal coli into the upstream portions of the May River causing negative impacts on the environment, commercial fishing operations, and recreational activities.

In September 2022, the Parties worked write a compelling grant application to the Rural Infrastructure Authority for the South Carolina Infrastructure Investment Program ("SCIIP"), a one-time grant initiative to improve water, wastewater, and stormwater systems throughout the state using federal funds allocated by the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act ("ARPA"). The scope of the project includes installation of a vacuum sewer system for the estimated 150 existing individual connections with capacity to accommodate an additional 50 connections as shown on the map attached to the Intergovernmental Agreement (**Attachment 1**). It is projected that grant awards might be announced some time in February 2023 but there has been no confirmation from the Rural Infrastructure Authority.

DISCUSSION:

The grant application was submitted in the name of BJWSA as the system owner, citing the Town and the County as equal partners. If the grant is awarded, there is a firm timeline to finalize the engineering of the system, procure services in accordance with the grant terms and conditions,

acquire the rights of way and complete construction. Funds must be committed no later than 12/31/2024 and expended no later than 12/31/2026. The grant would cover 75% of project costs and the parties would equally split the 25% local match. No grant money will cover the connections on private property; that money would have to come from the match. In the event that the grant is not awarded, the Parties deem this project important to each of their respective interests that they desire the work to proceed in the same timeline with equal financial contributions; each jurisdiction will commit funds from other sources if the grant is not received. The draft Intergovernmental Agreement was written to document this cooperative agreement in the alternate circumstances whether the grant was awarded or not. The Agreement was transmitted to all Parties for their review 12/15/2022.

NEXT STEPS: Upon approval by Town Council, Staff will sign the final version of the Intergovernmental Agreement so long as it does not materially differ from what is presented herein. If the terms change significantly, Staff will bring it back before Town Council.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Intergovernmental Agreement with Map
2. Resolution
3. Recommended Motion