



Chesterfield County, Virginia Utilities Department

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GEORGE B. HAYES, P.E.
Director

Water and Wastewater Assessment Districts

Requests for public water and wastewater service

Requests for public water or wastewater service can be made via e-mail on the Utilities Department's website, by a phone call, or in person by visiting the Utilities Department's main office. Staff will advise the requestor of the location of the closest water or wastewater line, and if not available for connection at the property line inform the requestor that Chesterfield County does not fund the extension of public water and wastewater service into developed areas. The requestor may solely fund the design and construction of the extension of the public water or wastewater systems, or, pursue the "assessment district process" as explained below. If the requestor is initially interested in pursuing an extension project through an assessment district, they are asked if they would be willing to act as a liaison between their neighbors and the County staff. Information will be provided to the liaison for distribution to their neighbors. The liaison is also asked to advise the County staff of questions and concerns expressed by the residents.

Creation and Funding of an Assessment District

In 1989 the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors adopted the policy of creating assessment districts to fund extensions of the public water and wastewater system into existing residential areas. The Code of Virginia allows the governing body of any County to impose taxes/assessments upon all owners of property abutting a new utility extension for the construction of that line.

Before establishing an assessment district, the Board of Supervisors must hold a public hearing at which time any interested property owners may speak either in favor of, or in opposition to, creation of the assessment district. After the public hearing the Board may create the assessment district if 2/3 of the Board, or 4 out of 5 members, vote in favor of the district. The amount to be assessed against each property will be advertised as required prior to the public hearing. An assessment district may be considered if a "clear majority" of the property owners in a given area support the project. However, if an assessment district is created by the Board, all properties that abut the utility line(s) will be assessed for a portion of the cost of the extension.

Identification of Service Area/Engineering Evaluation/Cost Estimates

Based on information provided by the requestor, and/or known limitations of existing water and wastewater lines, a "service area" is identified, which will also be considered as the proposed "assessment district". Staff will use as-built plans of existing facilities, topographic and aerial maps, and other data to determine the most logical and economical way to extend utility lines to serve the area. Staff is limited to preparing a preliminary "office design", and does not perform field surveying

and soil borings as would be done by an engineering firm when/if the project is approved. Once a water or wastewater line routing is selected, a "preliminary project cost estimate" is prepared, which includes engineering, easement acquisition (if needed), advertisement, construction, and property restoration.

Determination and Payment of Assessments

The individual assessment per property is usually determined by dividing the "preliminary project cost estimate" by the number of residential lots that would be in the assessment district, with each property owner paying an equal share. If an individual owns multiple lots they would be assessed for each lot, unless evidence is provided that several lots are "encumbered" by a single residence (i.e. structure built over a common lot line), or lots cannot be developed for other reasons. If an area under consideration contains larger, undeveloped properties, the assessment would be calculated on both a "per acre" basis as well as a "per lot" basis, so that properties with the potential to be developed with multiple lots would pay a proportionally higher assessment than existing lots with a single dwelling.

When the Board of Supervisors creates an assessment district, within several days the County will record a lien against each property in the amount of the assessment. Payment is not due until the property owner is notified by the County that the utility extension has been completed and is available for connection.

The assessed amount can be paid by the property owner in one of two (2) ways:

1. In full, upon completion of the project; or
2. The property owner may choose a payment plan in which payments are made semi-annually over a period not to exceed twenty (20) years. The interest rate is set by the Board of Supervisors on the date the assessment district is created, and is the rate of the U.S. Treasury 1-year bill on that date.

Property owners age 65 years or older, who live on their property, may have their assessment payments deferred while they occupy their residence, for a period of 10 years if they do not connect to the public water or wastewater system. The deferral of payments will end if that property decides to connect to the public water or wastewater system within the 10-year period, and they will then revert to semi-annual payments for the remainder of the 10-year period, with a balloon payment at the end of the 10th year equal to the deferred payments prior to connection.

When the water or wastewater extension project has been completed, should the "final" total project cost be less than what was originally estimated, the County will re-calculate the assessments and pass the savings on to the property owners. However, should the "final" cost exceed the original estimate, the additional cost will NOT be borne by the property owners, but will be absorbed by the County.

Additional Fees

The assessments paid would go towards constructing the actual public water or wastewater line. Those property owners who wish to connect to the public water or wastewater line and establish public service must also pay a "**connection fee**". The connection fee can be paid over a three (3) year period. Connection fees are set by the Board of Supervisors with adoption of the annual budget and are subject

to change. To determine the current water or wastewater connection fee, please contact the Utilities Department "New Construction" staff at (804) 748-1862 or visit the county website at <https://www.chesterfield.gov/513/Rates-Fees>.

In addition, for those connecting there will also be a "**plumbers fee**" charged by a plumber to connect their residence to the public water or wastewater line. This cost may vary greatly, depending on how far from the street/road the existing house is located, where the well or septic tank and drain field is located, and how the existing residential plumbing is arranged.

Timeframe

From creation of the assessment district to releasing the line for connection will generally take twelve (12) to twenty-four (24) months to allow time for design and construction of the lines.

Requirement to Connect to the Public System

Although an existing residential structure may be included within an assessment district, there is no requirement by the County that the structure immediately connect to public water and/or wastewater systems.

What to Do with an Existing Well and/or Septic Tank and Drain Field

Property owners connecting to the public water system must have a licensed plumber disconnect their house plumbing from the well. They may continue to use the well for outdoor uses, but outside spigots connected to the well cannot be tied to the house plumbing that is connected to the public water system. The plumbing work must be inspected by a Chesterfield County plumbing inspector. The Chesterfield Health District Office of the Virginia Department of Health can provide guidance as to what measures to take when abandoning a septic tank and drain field. Contact the Environmental Health Supervisor at (804) 748-1695.

Getting Started

If you are interested in pursuing the extension of public water or wastewater service for your neighborhood as an assessment district, you should first talk to your neighbors and/or those who own property adjacent to yours. Provide them each with a copy of [this document](#), and follow-up by asking them to sign a petition indicating their interest. If the majority are interested in pursuing the matter further, send a letter to the Utilities Department (address below) asking that we evaluate the extension of public water or wastewater service (specify which, or both) as a possible assessment district. Include a copy of the petition with your request. Staff will advise the district supervisor of the petition. If you are not able to serve as the liaison between the neighborhood and the County, please let us know who in the neighborhood will.

When staff has completed its evaluation of a request, the property owners will be mailed a package containing the following:

- Letter explaining the assessment district process, and giving the "preliminary project cost estimate" and the "individual assessment per property";
- Map showing boundaries of possible assessment district and routing of utility line;

- Blank Interest Survey Form (enclosed) to indicate individual property owners “support” or “opposition” to creation of an assessment district.

Once the property owners have had the opportunity to review the information, they should sign and return the completed survey form to the Utilities Department staff. Staff will review the forms to determine if there is sufficient interest to pursue the matter further. It should be understood that property owners who do not complete a survey form will be considered as “in opposition” to the proposal. The Utilities Department will advise the district supervisor and the neighborhood liaison of the results of the interest survey. If there is a “clear majority” supporting the proposed assessment district, the process moves forward, and a public hearing before the Board of Supervisors will be scheduled. If a “clear majority” opposes creation of an assessment district, the project file will be closed. The matter can be pursued again in the future.

Staff Availability for Neighborhood Meetings

After the neighborhood liaison has distributed information to the impacted property owners, should there be questions and concerns among the property owners, the neighborhood liaison can request that County staff attend a neighborhood meeting. The supervisor for that district should also be invited. This can be arranged to coincide with a regularly scheduled civic league, or homeowners’ association meeting, or by the neighborhood liaison contacting all property owners. It is recommended that these meetings be held in a local church, school, or civic association facility.

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