

On-lot hookups delayed in Pearce Creek project

By Jacob Owens jowens@cecilwhig.com

Jun 22, 2017



Residents of Bay View Estates, a Pearce Creek-area neighborhood, are still awaiting word on when on-lot hookups to a municipal water service system will begin.

- CECIL WHIG PHOTO BY JACOB OWENS



Bay View Estates residents also voiced their displeasure over the road restoration efforts following the installation of service lines in the neighborhood.

CECIL WHIG PHOTO BY JACOB OWENS

CECILTON — Officials reported last week that work to hook up homes in the Pearce Creek-area communities has been delayed slightly as they work through some unforeseen permit issues with the county, drawing some criticism from residents about the lack of communication.

Chris Rogers, of AECOM, the contracted engineering firm for the town of Cecilton, said a misunderstanding about the licensees who need to be on premises for the work has led the contractor to pull more permits than expected. Officials had originally hoped to begin the work by late spring, but it's now trailed into early summer.

Rogers said he expects the issues to be ironed out soon and work to begin shortly thereafter. There are 235 lots to be connected to the system, although a handful of residents are holding out.

More than four years after a U.S. Geological Survey report found that disposal of dredge spoils had degraded water quality in local wells, the residents of three Pearce Creek-area communities are awaiting a solution to the problem.

Over the past few years, officials from the Maryland Port Authority, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Maryland Department of the Environment, Maryland Department of Planning, the town of Cecilton and Cecil County have all helped develop a plan to seal the 260-acre Earleville site with a geosynthetic liner that aims to prevent leaching of naturally-occurring contaminants from dredge spoils into local water tables while also running a public water service line to the West View Shores, Bay View Estates and Sunset Pointe communities.

At a June 16 stakeholders meeting, state officials also informed the residents that they will be required to disconnect home water treatment systems before they would be allowed to tap into the new service line — an issue that some homeowners hoped could be resolved. While they could reconnect and recalibrate their systems after installation is complete, they risk voiding the one-year warranty for the equipment installed in the project.

Officials emphasized that Cecilton's water is treated immediately after being pumped from the Magothy aquifer that lies 100 feet below ground. Heavily regulated by federal agencies, the municipal water system was not found to be in excess of any worrying chemicals in its latest annual report.

Meanwhile, Bill Haines, president of the Bay View Estates Homeowners Association, read a long lists of concerns from homeowners about the road conditions as left following the installation of service mains in the neighborhood. The complaints ranged from substandard subgrade and road material, unwanted crowning of the road surface, loss and change of driveway surfaces, differences in road elevation and elevated road edges that could be a safety hazard.

While Rogers said that his team would review the homeowners' concerns, he noted that the Maryland Port Authority authorized an additional \$350,000 for the project to fix existing issues with the neighborhood's roads rather than leaving them for future issues.

“Our construction management team felt it was much better than what was there. Crowns were put in as a typical road construction technique to shed water,” he said, adding the lack of crowns ultimately damaged the roads prior to construction.

While several of the community members were visibly agitated by the road conditions, Wilma Fitzner, of Bay View Estates, asked that project officials simply communicate more frequently.

“I think the biggest problem right now is the communication,” she said, noting that while the contractor may have felt that the result was an improvement it was not discussed with residents.

Other the other side of the community, however, Valerie Woodruff, a West View Shores resident, said that she and her neighbors were “very pleased” with the end result of the work there. Woodruff even noted that the contractor was able to fix several lingering water-related issues with their roads.

In other news, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also reported that monitoring well drilling should be completed this week and its discharge monitoring plan is still under review by the Maryland Department of the Environment.

In recent weeks, the Corps also had a break-in at its Pearce Creek work site, where many high-value pieces of drilling and construction equipment are stored.

“Nothing major was stolen, although there was some damage caused,” reported Gavin Kaiser, the Corps’ C&D Canal project manager. “We think it was probably a scouting mission for someone to see what was available to be stolen.”

Due to this incident, the Corps will not reopen the Pearce Creek Dredge Material Containment Area to the public until after the project is fully completed. Prior to the most recent project, the disposal site was a popular hiking and birdwatching location.