

CHAPTER II

PREVIOUS SEWAGE FACILITIES-RELATED PLANNING

A. EXISTING SEWAGE FACILITIES PLANNING

Until 1992, Westtown Township utilized the 1970 Chester County Master Sewer Plan as its Act 537 Plan. That plan called for significant areas of the Township to be served by the Westtown Wastewater Treatment Company by 1988. Well into the 1990's, however, only a limited area in the Township's northeast corner was being served by this facility, which was the only treatment facility within Westtown Township. The only Act 537 activities from 1970 to 1992 were in the form of plan revisions, 10 of which were processed between 1981 and 1992.

The Township undertook its own base plan in 1992 to address the possible need for sewage facilities to serve the diminishing, yet still significant, number of vacant tracts remaining in Westtown. A half-dozen areas of concentrated on-site system failures also were of concern, as was the performance of the Westtown Wastewater Treatment Co. plant. The plan's selected alternative to address future needs where on-lot systems were not appropriate, was lagoon treatment and land application. For the four drainage areas into which the Township was divided for the plan, potential treatment and irrigation sites were shown on Fig. 4.1. The plan recognized the expansion and continued operation of the existing treatment plant as temporary, until such time as necessary land acquisition would make the wastewater reclamation and reuse system feasible. Subsequent to the 1992 Plan, the Township was unable to acquire the necessary land for spray irrigation to accommodate wastewater flows from both problem areas and the flows in excess of the treatment capacity of the Westtown Wastewater Treatment Co. plant.

Since the 1992 plan, Westtown has prepared an update to its Act 537 Plan. Completed in December 1998, its primary purpose was to examine the former Westtown Wastewater Treatment Co. plant, ownership of which was transferred to the Township in 1997 (at which time the facility's name became the Westtown – Chester Creek Plant). Coupled with an infiltration/inflow study and the recommended creation of an equalization tank, the update proposed a re-rating of the plant's permitted capacity from 290,000 gpd to 495,000 gpd to accommodate short-term wastewater treatment needs resulting from increased development.

This recommendation was presented with the understanding that, upon DEP approval of the update, the Township would prepare a comprehensive revision of the 1992 plan. This plan document is the result of the Township's commitment to preparing that update.

B. TOWNSHIP PLANS AND ORDINANCES RELATED TO SEWAGE FACILITIES PLANNING

1. Comprehensive Plan (1987)

This comprehensive plan is currently in effect for Westtown Township. Among its goals are:

- To avoid environmental harm from development;
- To provide for a variety of residential living environments.

The comprehensive plan document is divided into several plan elements, one of which is “The Plan for Preserving Agriculture and Conserving the Natural and Cultural Environment.” Within it is a discussion of the need for careful management of stormwater runoff. A number of specific management techniques are offered, among them the provision of adequate, undisturbed setbacks along all creeks and major drainage channels.

This plan element also discusses the protection of Westtown’s sensitive natural features, including floodplains, steep slopes, woodlands, soils with seasonally high water table, and agricultural lands. Guidelines for protecting floodplains include maintaining alluvial soil areas as open space and leaving natural floodplain vegetation undisturbed. A “Soils and Floodplains” map shows those areas of the Township that fall within the 100-year floodplain and/or contain alluvial soils.

As an adjunct and complement to the Westtown Comprehensive Plan, the Township completed an Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan in 1993. As part of the plan’s inventory of Township resources, the 100-year floodplain is described and mapped. Other water-related features covered in the plan include stream corridor classification, hydric soils, headwater areas, and wetlands. In its Needs Assessment, the plan points out that the Westtown Township Zoning Ordinance protects all “creek valleys and associated floodplains, wetlands and alluvial and hydric soils.”

In “The Plan for Residential Areas,” each of the plan’s four proposed residential land use categories has implications for wastewater facilities, either as by-right densities or with available overlay opportunities. Both the Agricultural/Cluster and Rural-Suburban Districts propose base densities designed for on-lot systems. Each also offers flexible development and/or clustering opportunities that would require other than individual on-lot systems. The Suburban District, at a density of 2.5 dwelling units per acre, is shown primarily in areas where infill is appropriate and central sewer service is provided. The Semi-Urban District proposes a variety of dwelling types at densities of 5-6 units per acre.

In areas to be served by individual on-lot systems, the plan calls for minimum lot sizes of one acre, adequate separation between wells and septic systems, and enough area within the lot to install a backup system. It is noted that multi-family

development is limited by the lack of central sewage facilities, both existing and proposed.

In "The Plan for Community Facilities and Services," central sewage is noted as a necessity for cluster development and as advantageous from an environmental health standpoint. It also is recognized as a stimulus for development. The plan maps the Township's existing sewer service areas, describes the Westtown Wastewater Treatment Co., and notes the possible connection to either the West Goshen or West Chester treatment facilities.

The Community Facilities and Services Plan concludes that, for the most part, on-lot systems will continue to be relied upon in Westtown, with major extensions of central systems unlikely. It does suggest examining the severity of concentrated on-site failures and the feasibility of providing service to them. Preparation of the Township's own Act 537 Plan also is recommended. Information from the Township to homeowners on the management of on-lot systems is suggested, along with further evaluation of package treatment plants and community on-lot systems, particularly as means to serve flexible or cluster development.

2. Zoning Ordinance (1991, as amended through Sept. 1998)

Westtown's current zoning ordinance was prepared following adoption of the Township's comprehensive plan to implement its policies. Environmentally sensitive areas of the Township are regulated under Article 4, "Natural Features Protection". Included are two overlay districts, Floodplain and Steep Slope Conservation, as well as standards governing wetlands, soils with seasonally high water table, vegetation, agricultural soils, and topsoil. Sect. 1517 contains standards for the protection of groundwater resources.

Aside from portions of the Rt. 202 and Rt. 3 corridors, most of the Township is zoned for residential use. The Agricultural/Cluster Residential District (A/C) permits single-family dwellings on lots with a minimum size of two acres. The district also permits residential use through Cluster Development and Flexible Development. Under the Cluster Development regulations, the minimum lot size is 16,000 square feet. Under the Flexible Development regulations, the net density of single-family dwellings may be four units per acre; the respective net densities for two-family, townhouse, and apartment dwellings are six, 10 and 12 units per acre.

The Residential District (R-1) provides the same residential use opportunities as the A/C District, except that the minimum lot size for conventional single-family development is one acre.

In the Residential District (R-2), opportunities for cluster or flexible development are not provided. The minimum lot size for single-family dwellings is based upon the type of water and sewage facilities to be used. With both on-lot water and sewage, the minimum requirement is one acre. Where one or the other is off-site, the minimum lot required is 30,000 square feet, and with both water and sewer off-site it is reduced to 22,000 square feet.

The Residence-Office District (R-3) is designed for multi-family dwellings. Apartment densities range from four to ten dwellings per acre, depending on the number of bedrooms. The density of townhouse development is determined on the basis of one dwelling unit per 5,000 square feet of net tract area. The R-3 District also permits Residential Care Facilities for Senior Citizens, in which a density of 25 beds per acre is permitted. Water and sewage facilities acceptable to the Board of Supervisors are required, with centralized systems declared to satisfy this standard.

The Multi-Use District (M-U) provides for townhouse development on the same basis as is provided in the R-3 District. Mobile home parks also are permitted in the M-U District, at a gross density of four units per acre. The ordinance stipulates that a mobile home park must be served by off-site water and sewage disposal systems. One further option in the M-U District is Small-lot Single-Family Detached Development, in which individual lots of 3,000 square feet are permitted.

In the Planned Office Campus District (POC), any plan for office campus use must include “engineering and architectural plans for the treatment and disposal of sanitary sewage.” The POC District also permits Residential Care Facilities for Senior Citizens, subject to the same standards that apply in the M-U District.

While the text of the zoning ordinance describes a variety of densities and uses for which wastewater facilities other than on-lot systems would be required, the zoning map and pattern of existing land use now confines most of the future development opportunities to the A/C and R-1 Districts. Nonetheless, the opportunities for cluster and flexible development in those districts sustains the Township’s need to plan for alternatives to on-lot systems to serve potential new development.

3. Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (1995, as amended)

Under Westtown’s Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Sect. 602.3-D-2, applicants for preliminary plan approval must include “a statement noting water and sewer needs and verification of the availability of both.” Sect. 602.3-D-3 requires that the method and ownership of sewage disposal and water supply systems be noted. Sect. 602.5 authorizes the Board of Supervisors, at its discretion, to require submission of certain Supplementary Studies. One of these, as specified in Sect. 804.2, is a Water Study. Its content is to include the following: “Plans for placement of all wells and sewage systems shall be clearly shown for verification of safe sewage disposal.” Complete information on the water/sewer company also is required.

In Article 7, requirements for final plans include information on proposed sewage disposal facilities. As at the preliminary plan stage, the Board of Supervisors may require a Water Study.

Standards and criteria for the design and operation of sewage facilities are contained in Sect. 927, Sanitary Sewage Disposal and Treatment Facilities.

Both the preliminary and final plan submissions must include a Storm Water Management Plan in accordance with the requirements of Sect. 803. As cited in Sect. 919, the standards for stormwater management and erosion control are contained in a separate Westtown Township Erosion and Storm Water Management Ordinance.

4. Chester County Comprehensive Plan Policy Element (1996)

Titled **Landscapes**, this plan offers a basis for reaching consistency on land use policy between the county and its 73 municipalities. Several “livable landscapes” that comprise the county are described and depicted; these include natural, rural, suburban, and urban land. As shown on Map 1, Livable Landscapes – 2020, the county envisions Westtown to contain a suburban and natural landscape pattern over the next two decades. One of the criteria for the suburban designation is that the area have available, or be targeted for, infrastructure such as central water and sewer facilities.