

Councilman: Town should focus on wastewater upgrades

By Robert King (Daily Staff Writer)

FRONT ROYAL — A Front Royal councilman says mandatory upgrades to the town's wastewater plant need to become a priority.

Front Royal Vice Mayor Timothy W. Darr requested information on the town's wastewater treatment plant during a recent meeting.

The Town Council will discuss compliance with the state's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act during a work session Monday. The act requires plants statewide to lessen nitrogen and phosphorous discharges.

"My goal is trying to get ~~the~~ council aware of what is coming down and move forward on this thing before it gets here," Darr said. "I am trying to get our ducks in a row and make this a priority."

Darr said that he was also motivated by news reports of the fish kills that have plagued the Shenandoah River since 2004.

"There are a lot of issues there," he said. "It sparked me to make sure that we as a town are doing everything we can to be in compliance with the new regulations and to see if we want to participate in the Chesapeake Bay Act."

The new discharge limits vary by location.

"[Some tributaries] have different limits than other tributaries in the state," said Timothy Fristoe, the town's wastewater treatment plant superintendent.

Fristoe said the plant currently wouldn't be in compliance of the DEQ's proposed 2011 limits.

The Town Council will decide during a work session Monday on an engineer that will draft a study on the plant. The engineer will "evaluate everything out here, look at operation, future limits and funding for [the upgrade] too," Fristoe said.

- Some of the earlier estimates for the upgrade called for \$25 million to \$30 million, Fristoe added.

There are some options for the town. One is grant funds from the state.

"Our town happens to be not exactly a small town but we aren't a large town," Fristoe said. "The only thing grant money will pay for is to do something to reduce nitrogen and phosphorous in the treatment possibilities."

Another option is to increase the plant's capacity.

"One option is we are a 4 million-gallon a day plant right now," Fristoe said. "We can go as high as 5.3 million a day and be in compliance with one of these updates."

The town might have to buy credits when it violates the limit. If the town had a "32,000-pound phosphorous limit and you put out 62,000, you have to pay for that extra 30,000," he said.

The town pays a credit for every pound it goes over. "It can be anywhere from \$8 to \$10 a pound," Fristoe said.

Whatever the town decides, it remains on a tight schedule to complete the upgrades before the 2011 deadline.

Fristoe said the engineering study would take nine months. Then an upgrade needs to be designed and a contractor found.

"We are on a tight schedule, by 2011 [we] would be buying credits one way or another," he said.

Darr said that the timing makes it a large priority for the town.

"The whole issue is that with the big rush for everybody to be in compliance with these wastewater treatment plants, the demand and cost are going up," he said. "You have to look at planning and look at priorities and [how it] will affect the town's budget."

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