

Sussex Borough OKs \$9,900 contract for water, sewer study

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SUSSEX BOROUGH — The Sussex Borough Council on Tuesday approved a motion to execute a contract with CP Engineers LLC to develop an overview and evaluation of the borough's water and sewer utility to assist the governing body in deciding the future of the utilities.

For the work, CP Engineers, of Sparta, will be paid \$9,900 for the scope of work. Scope of work includes: research of the water and sewer utilities in the borough, including an analysis of previous utility documents; a utility revenue analysis, where the costs associated with operating and maintaining the water and sewer utilities, as well as the revenue collected by customers, will be reviewed; and a system description and assessment report of the state of the water and sewer utilities.

Sussex Borough Mayor Jonathan Rose said the point of the work is so the governing body can have an accurate understanding of the workings and life cycle of the components of the water and sewer systems.

The borough's trying "to get a handle on current and future maintenance," he said.

Rose said that the borough will incorporate the Environmental Protection Agency's Check Up Program for Small Systems. "It's going to be an end product of (the work)."

The engineering firm will charge the borough \$1,500, which is included in the \$9,900 amount, for data entry into the EPA system.

The Check Up Program is a free software program used as an asset management tool for small drinking water and wastewater utilities.

The program's goals, according to the EPA's website, include facilitating more efficient and focused utility operations, and improving financial management to make the best use of limited resources.

In related business, the council also passed a motion to authorize preparation of a bid document for the borough's water and sewer utility.

While the motion does not confirm a sale, it opens up the opportunity for private companies to purchase the borough's utility system.

"There's a lengthy process," said Municipal Clerk Mark Zashack, noting that the documents would have to be prepared; the borough would have to solicit advertising for six

weeks; and allow interested companies to come in and inspect the utilities.

Council members Linda Masson and Annette Stendor voted against the motion.

"I have a problem with doing this right now," said Masson to the council. "The residents have seen no kind of relief" in their water and sewer bills.

Sussex Borough has a \$420 minimum quarterly utility charge, with \$300 for sewage and \$120 for water. "Once we turn this over are (the rates) going to go down?" Masson asked.

According to Masson, even if the borough sells the water and sewer utility to a private company, the borough's contract with the Sussex County Municipal Utilities Authority would still be valid. In a hypothetical situation, if the private company were to go bankrupt, the water and sewer utility contract would revert back to the borough.

If the potential company lets the utilities fall into disarray, the borough's responsible, Masson said to the council.

Council member Marina Krynicki said in the meeting, "We're not agreeing to sell, we're just looking."

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