

AQUEDUCT PURCHASE PROGRESS

by Fred Okrent

Many people are confused by the Pittsfield Aqueduct purchase issue. This article is an attempt to clear some of the confusion and answer most of the questions. Any remaining questions can be answered at the Public Information Meeting which will be held at 10:00 AM, Saturday, October 22 at the Town Hall. The Committee urges you to attend.

The committee firmly believes that purchase of the Aqueduct is important to the town for a number of reasons;

Pittsfield Aqueduct is owned by Pennichuck Water, which is owned by the City of Nashua. The only driving force is profit. They do not care about the Town of Pittsfield, only the money to be taken out of it.

Right now, during this drought, Pennichuck, which also owns and operates Locke Lake Colony water in Barnstead, is trucking water out of Pittsfield to use in Barnstead. Good for Locke Lake Colony, not so good for Pittsfield if the supply gets tight. If they decided to enter into a bottled water arrangement, they could do so and the Town would have no recourse. Our water, their profits.

If Nashua decided that they needed a large cash infusion, they could decide to begin selling the properties around Berry Pond. Those properties form a buffer for our water source, including the surrounding aquifers. That includes those properties outside the proposed Water District. What happens to the water quality in those areas as well as the supplied district?

Of course, if the water quality goes down, Pennichuck will be glad to boost the quality back up to where it should be...at a price. The wells outside the district; sorry about that, you're on your own!

Speaking of price, Pennichuck has gone to the PUC for a rate increase of about 8 ½ % every year and gotten it. That means the rate doubles every 10 years. Remember, the Town buildings are on metered water as well as many of the residents.

There are those that say that a village water district cannot be run as cheaply as Pittsfield Aqueduct. The Pittsfield Water District will not have a President or CEO or Board of Directors to pay every year. That fact alone will slow the increases in the rates. A municipal agency, such as the district, is more eligible for federal and state grants than a private company. That can provide additional savings.

We will form a Pittsfield Water District and elect commissioners to run it. The district will acquire the Aqueduct Company and administer the operation. It will undoubtedly contract with an outside agency for the operation. The district (ratepayers) will be the ones responsible for paying off the acquisition debt, the Town will not.

The district may contract with the town to do the billing, since the town gets the water usage reports to do the sewer billing. Another area for efficiency.

Finally, bond rates are at a very low rate right now; it is a good time to buy.

Forming a village district is the right thing to do. It will save the citizens of Pittsfield tax money; It will save the water users in the town money, and it will put Pittsfield in a position to control its own destiny and not have to depend on a private company or the City of Nashua, neither of which really care about the good of Pittsfield. Please come to the informational meeting. Ask any question you care to. We have nothing to hide and only want what is best for the town.