

Municipal Wastewater in Downtown New Lebanon

Prepared by the New Lebanon Conservation Advisory Council • May 2026

This brief memo is intended to serve as a helpful overview of a potential wastewater system in New Lebanon.

Health & safety — There are septic systems that are inadequate and failing in our downtown business district. This contributes to the current reality that it is unsafe for a significant number of downtown residents to drink their tap water. It also subjects the aquifer, the swamp, and the Wyomanock to elevated risk.

Business & economic development — Connecting to a municipal sewer system would enable existing businesses to become more sustainable by lowering their operating expenses. Meantime, new businesses, like a laundromat, could begin.

Engineering & operations — The system could be viable while serving a relatively small number of properties along Route 20, as indicated in the forthcoming feasibility study prepared by Lamont Engineers.

- This system would leave solid waste in a septic tank on each property, and the district would be responsible for maintaining and pumping those tanks.
- The system would use small-diameter pipes to carry effluent to the Brownfield at the old Bouchard junkyard to be processed via leach field.

Finances — None of the costs for this system would come from the Town's general funds. Private property owners and grants would cover all costs, and only the properties that connect would be responsible for these costs. There are two types of cost: debt service from design and construction on the one hand and ongoing operations and maintenance on the other.

- Overall design and construction costs are estimated to be \$5–6 million in total.
 - Utilizing NYS and other grants the project is anticipating roughly 70–80% of this total upfront cost, and NYS could offer low- or no-interest loans for the balance.
 - Therefore total debt service is estimated to be \$35,000–45,000 annually.
 - Each property would be responsible for an amount proportional to its estimated usage.
- O&M is estimated to be \$40,000 annually.
 - It includes everything from administration through maintenance to equipment replacement.
 - Each property that's connected to the system would be responsible for an amount proportional to its estimated usage.
- Tilden Commons would likely cover roughly half the total annual cost of the system.

- As a result, a property with a typical single-family residence would likely pay an annual total of \$800–1000. The exact number depends on a number of technical factors, especially which other properties decide to connect to the system.
- Most properties with a business would pay more, depending on estimated usage.

Legal process and background — The Town would be represented in this process by Hodgson Russ.

- Properties that connect to the sewer system would cover 100% of the costs of the system.
 - Our plan is to collect a signature on a petition from every property owner that wants to connect to the system.
 - Signing the petition means agreeing to pay a “not to exceed” amount — and then the system would ultimately go forward if, and only if, these numbers work out.
- Properties that do not connect to the system will not pay a penny for it.
 - However, some properties that do *not* connect may need to be in the district. That’s because State law requires that properties in a district must be contiguous. There can be no “missing teeth” in a district.
 - Properties that wait to connect at a later date would likely pay a fee to do so.
- As background, State law has several requirements for a proper petition.
 - A majority of assessment-weighted owners must sign. A majority of owner-residents must sign. And all of these signatures must be notarized.
 - This group of requirements acts as a limit on the number of properties that can be in the district but not connect.
- At its June meeting, the Town Board would receive the petition, form a sewer district, and handle SEQR.
 - The Town is lead agency for SEQR, having made that declaration in Feb 2025.
 - Lamont Engineers and Hodgson Russ will support this process, with Lamont Engineers leading the TB through the SEQR questions.
- At its July meeting, the Town Board would pass a bond resolution and would authorize grant applications, including one to the State’s Environmental Facilities Corporation.
 - Lamont Engineers would do the work to submit any grant applications at no cost to the Town.
 - Creating the district and passing a bond resolution are required to apply for State grant funding, but doing so absolutely does NOT commit the Town to proceeding with the construction of the system.
 - Rather, the system would go forward if, and only if, the Town receives all the grant funding necessary to meet everyone’s “not to exceed” costs.