

WHAT IS THE CRANFORD CONSERVATION UTILITY?

FOCUS IS ON COST REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The objective of the Cranford Conservation Utility is to find opportunities to reduce energy, water and sewer use to save residents money and protect the environment. The Township spends \$2.5 million on these utilities and even if we find only 10% reduction in costs that is \$250,000 or \$170 per taxpayer. If we are successful efforts towards aggregation of energy supply could provide substantial savings to residents while lowering carbon emissions.

What is new in 2011 is the township will bill based on usage a sewer use bill. People and large users will pay according to how much of the sewer system they use. It gives the township the direct relationship with the customer. Our goal is to use that relationship to find ways we can cut sewer inflow; to lower energy use by conservation and to use water supply more effectively. This only works if there is a benefit to residents through lower bills.

Cranford has long been a leader in environmental protection with its venerable Environmental Commission and recent Green Team activities. But a direct focus on conservation is a different focus because it will focus on the customer. Customers respond differently if usage and conservation are combined as a decision point.

We have chosen to make this an advisory board so that the Township Committee has the final approval in the board's actions. In the future it could be a standalone entity as long as it was able to lower costs. The Cranford Conservation Utility will have a virtual \$2.5 million budget representing the existing sewer, electricity and water costs to the local government. Its mandate will be to reduce usage and lower the cost. The utility will not have paid employees but the Township's Assistant Engineer will devote part of the time to finding conservation opportunities. Already the office is managing the community center energy audit; solar panels on the library and potential grant for lighting efficiencies at the parking garage.

The fair sewer billing program will be administered by Clark but the Conservation Advisory Board will propose policies and review the billing program.

The Conservation Utility will have a seven member board and several associates. The board will establish an agenda and report through the assistant engineer to the Township Committee.

Mayor Aschenbach said the objectives of the board in 2011 will be:

- (1) Ensure the fair sewer billing program is fair
- (2) Solicit bids for alternative energy suppliers for the municipal facilities
- (3) Administer the energy audit program of municipal facilities and the solar panels on the library
- (4) Implement a sewer inflow reduction program through public education and enforcement.
- (5) Recommend to Township Committee priority infiltration projects and advocate plan to RVSA

- (6) Establish a carbon register for Cranford website
- (7) Develop plan for a municipal aggregation program for renewable energy and residential conservation

Residents want a fair sewer bill and we have taken another step to focus on conservation as a priority to lower costs and to work to protect the environment.