

# Brunswick County Neighborhood Water Main Extension Policy

## Petition Process

### 20 or More Parcels

#### Petition Process

The Brunswick County Board of Commissioners has established a Neighborhood Special Assessment District Petition Process for Water Distribution. This policy allows residents in existing neighborhoods with twenty (20) or more parcels to petition the board for the installation of water mains in their neighborhood so they may receive water service at their property. The board may allocate funds each year for the construction of water mains in neighborhoods that petition the board for service. Because of the high cost of installing sewer mains, the board has implemented a maximum per parcel assessment policy for water main petitions to allow property owners to know the maximum assessment amount at the time they sign the petition. The maximum assessment amount is a not-to-exceed amount so if the project cost is lower than expected, the property owner will be assessed the actual cost of the project. Current assessment rates may be found on the Public Utilities Department's rate schedule for the current fiscal year.

The first step in the petition process is for someone in the neighborhood to meet with the staff of the county's Engineering Services Department. The petition process will be explained to the resident and the resident will determine if they would like to proceed with circulation of a petition. If the resident decides to proceed, county staff will assist the resident in determining the area to be served. A map of the proposed service area will be developed and provided to the resident. County staff will also determine the property owners who would be served by the project and provide the resident with a petition form listing all of the property owners and their mailing addresses.

The resident would be responsible for circulating the petition in the neighborhood and collecting signatures of property owners. The petition shall be returned to the Engineering Services Department no later than ninety (90) days from the date it was issued by county staff to the resident. This is necessary to holding the maximum assessment rate.

Residents who rent their properties from the legal owner of a parcel are not eligible to sign the petition; while parcel owners who rent their property to a resident may sign. Multiple petition forms may be circulated as some property owners may not live in the neighborhood. Once the resident circulating the petition has obtained all of the signatures, and either yes or no on the petition, the petition form(s) are returned to the Engineering Services Department.

The Engineering Services Department staff will review the petition and determine the number of property owners who have signed the petition in favor of the project. If the number of property owners who have signed the petition exceeds 50% of the property owners eligible to sign the petition, the Engineering Services Department staff will forward the petition to the Utility Board for their consideration. If the Utility Board approves the petition, the petition will be forwarded to the Board of Commissioners for consideration.

Brunswick County's decision to undertake an assessment project shall not require endorsement from a majority of the property owners benefiting from said project. In determining whether or not to proceed with an assessment project, the Board of Commissioners will consider the needs of all property owners who are impacted by such a project and may establish a different minimum endorsement percentage for consideration of projects.

If approved, the board may choose to create the special assessment district for the design and construction of the project. Or, if all funds have been exhausted for the given fiscal year, it will be added to the Water Distribution System Special Assessment Districts Priority List. Using the priority list, assessment projects shall be rated using several factors. Based upon the ratings in this process, each project will be prioritized for construction by Brunswick County. The priority list is evaluated one time per fiscal year. All petitions received prior to the Board of Commissioners budget retreat will be evaluated in the next fiscal year's priority list. Depending on the priority ranking and the amount of funds available, the design of the water mains would start after July 1 with the new fiscal year.

#### Priority Rating System

To assist the Board of Commissioners in determining the projects that should be constructed in any particular year from all of the valid petitions received, county staff developed a priority rating system. Each project will be rated on six different criteria including cost per structure, cost per lot, percent of property owners signing the petition, public health concerns, roadway status, and existence of a sewer collection system. The rating criteria are weighted to reflect the importance of the rating criteria. Ranges have been established to eliminate subjectivity in the rating process. The rating process uses a 100 point scale with 100 being the highest point total.

After each project has been rated, the project will be ranked according to the number of points determined in the rating process. The project(s) with the highest number of points would be the first project(s) recommended to the Board of Commissioners for inclusion in the next budget year.

#### Assessment

At the beginning of the fiscal year, the Board of Commissioners will establish maximum per parcel assessment rates for Water Distribution System Special Assessment Districts.

If the Board of Commissioners orders the water mains to be installed in a neighborhood, the board will create a Special Assessment District. Property owners in the Special Assessment District will be required to pay their proportionate share of the total cost of constructing the water mains needed to provide service to their property. In this program, that proportionate share will be as follows:

If the cost of constructing the mains exceeds the amount of the maximum assessment rate set by the Board of Commissioners for the year the work was ordered, property owners in the Special Assessment District would pay said maximum assessment rate.

If the cost of constructing the mains is less than the amount of the maximum assessment rate set by the Board of Commissioners for the year the work was ordered, property owners in the Special Assessment District would only pay their proportionate share of the actual project cost.

Prior to establishment of the Special Assessment District, the Utility Board will hold a public hearing to receive input from those property owners within the Special Assessment District. Property owners within the Special Assessment District will receive a letter letting them know the date, time, and place of the public hearing.

If after receiving input from the property owners, the Board of Commissioners orders the work to be done, then the county staff will oversee the design and construction of the project. After completion of the project and receipt of all required approvals to operate the system, each property owner will receive a letter indicating the amount of the assessment on their property and notifying them that they may apply for service.

Extension to new development will not be financed through the assessment process. If undeveloped land within an assessment area benefits from an assessment project, then such land will be assessed for the improvements. Undeveloped land through or along the construction routes of offsite line extensions may also be assessed.

#### **IMPORTANT**

**The Board of Commissioners reserves the right to reject any and all bids and cancel the Special Assessment District if the overall cost of the project exceeds the projected revenue generated by the assessment and the board considers the county's required contribution to make up the difference between the project cost and assessment revenue is excessive.**

Upon completion of the project, property owners will be notified and a Final Assessment Roll adopted. Liens against the property will be recorded as security for the amount of the assessment. Assessments may be paid without interest at any time before the expiration of thirty (30) days from the date that notice of confirmation of the Final Assessment Roll is published. If the assessments are not paid within this time, all installments shall bear interest at a rate set by the Board of Commissioners in the assessment proceedings until paid. The payment period for the installment payment of assessments shall be three (3) years. In the event one or more payments of the assessment against a parcel of property are not made in accordance with the terms for such payment, Brunswick County may take action under the lien to collect the money due.

For property owners with existing structures on their property who make application for service and pay their assessment in total within one year of the notice of confirmation of the Final Assessment Roll, the Water Capital Recovery Fee will be waived. The property owner will still be required to pay the Water Transmission Fee. All property owners with existing structures connecting after the expiration of the one-year period will be required to pay the Capital Recovery Fee and Wastewater Transmission Fee in effect at the time of application for service.

In some cases, the county may elect to increase the size of the water main beyond the size needed to provide potable water service and fire protection within the SAD. The maximum amount of the assessment to the property owner will be based upon the assessment rate established by the Board of Commissioners regardless of the size of the main installed.

### **Brunswick County Public Utilities**

#### *Administration*

P. O. Box 249 Bolivia, NC 28422  
250 Grey Water Road NE Supply, NC  
910-253-2657

#### *Customer Service / Billing*

P. O. Box 469  
Bolivia, NC 28422  
75 Courthouse Drive NE  
910-253-2655 (option 3)

#### **Engineering Services**

P. O. Box 249  
Bolivia, NC 28422  
75 Courthouse Drive NE  
Building I  
910-253-2500