

## **Water System Update – September 25, 2019**

Since there are many steps involved in the Town of Oak Ridge's exploration of a possible municipal water system, this post provides an interim update on the status of those efforts and possible future steps.

Due diligence is key to the Town's ongoing efforts to ensure a safe, plentiful, and reliable water supply for Oak Ridge residents that will serve as the foundation of a municipal system. The system starts small, with minimal tax dollars. As the system grows over the next 10-20 years, it will have the potential to make a real difference in our community by providing additional water backup, connectivity, and fire suppression. The proposed system would have no impact on existing wells or private well owners, nor does it in any way encourage increased development. All current development standards and land use provisions remain unchanged, and Oak Ridge remains committed to setting a high bar for development in order to preserve what's best about our rural and historic community.

Last week, the Town held a final working group meeting with Envirolink, an outside consultant and water system operator active throughout the southeast and midwest (including Oak Ridge). Envirolink was hired to complete a review of the financial feasibility, legal, operational, and administrative operations of a potential water system. Their work included the financial feasibility analysis that was presented at the September 5 Town Council meeting; they are also helping the Town develop a comprehensive Water Management Plan (including water rules and regulations, procedures, policies, etc.). The Town hopes to have final drafts of several documents available to the public prior to the October 3 Town Council meeting.

The Water System Management Plan would be the centerpiece for documentation that would be submitted to the state to demonstrate that the Town has the administrative and financial capacity to operate a municipal water system. Until the state approves the Plan, the water ordinances and text amendments approved at the September Town Council meeting have no force.

Town Council will consider several elements of the proposed Water System Rules and Regulations at future meetings. Ongoing review of the complex documentation required to establish a municipal water system would then follow.

Should the town choose to move forward with a submission to the state, one of the next steps will be for the Town to hire a company to operate the system and finalize its submission to the state, which would include an operating budget and fee

structure for the proposed system. (Municipalities are allowed to set their own fee structures.)

Additional steps would then be necessary for the proposed Town water system to become fully operational.

As always, input from residents is welcome. Please feel free to Town Hall or any Town Council member for additional information.

*Copies of all relevant documents are available on the Town's website at [oakridgenc.com](http://oakridgenc.com):*

-  [Water System Presentation](#)
-  [Text Amendment](#)
-  [Water System Ordinance](#)
-  [Mayor's Message on Municipal Water System](#)
-  [Resolution of Intent-Municipal Water System](#)