

# Courtland Rural Village LCSA/Homeowner Meeting Questions and Answers

**1. Are we in the Transition Policy of the Loudoun County General Plan?**

No, Courtland Rural Village is part of the Rural Policy Area of the Comprehensive General Plan, which means that only individual on-site systems or community-based systems are allowed by the Plan. Changing this requires a Comprehensive Plan amendment. (S.Villegas, LCSA)

**2. What is the total cost associated with extending central wastewater services to this development?**

Initial calculations show that extending central wastewater service to the Courtland Rural Village will cost approximately \$10-12 million, to serve 244 homes. This is a cost of \$40-50 thousand per home. (M. Schwartz, LCSA).

**3. How could a central sewer line reach Courtland Rural Village?**

See attached conceptual map for tie-in options. (T. Danielson, LCSA)

**4. Provide cost estimates, both in the short-term and long-term, comparing the costs associated with a communal wastewater system and central systems?**

	<b>Community System Rate</b>	<b>Central Service Rate</b>
<b>Average Annual Sewer Bill (Year 1-20)</b>	\$1,000	\$3,500 [\$400 + \$3,100 in Capital Recovery Costs]*
<b>20 plus years</b>	\$1,000	\$400

\* Calculated at \$40K capital costs per household and 3% interest over 20 years.

**5. What is the status of the planned extension of central utilities to this area and what are the trigger points?**

There is no current plan to allow the extension of central utilities to the Rural Policy Area. A plan of this nature would require a Comprehensive Plan Amendment. (T. Danielson, LCSA)

**6. I have read that there are grants available to assist in funding the communal treatment facilities – was this option pursued? If so, what was the outcome? If not, why not and can they still be pursued to help fund the operating costs in Courtland Rural Village?**

LCSA is unaware of any grants available for funding operations of a communal system facility. If you have identified any qualifying grants, LCSA would be interested in reviewing them. Please submit them to me at [todd.danielson@lcsa.org](mailto:todd.danielson@lcsa.org) or mail them to me at c/o LCSA, P.O. Box 4000, Leesburg, VA 20177. (T. Danielson, LCSA)

**7. What was the developer's and the builder's commitment to establishing the infrastructure (water/sewage/roads) to this community and have they met this commitment?**

By proffer the developer committed to provide county water, to construct a communal wastewater treatment and disposal system, and to provide streets to be taken into the state system. The developer has met this commitment. (K.Compton, Courtland-Loudoun, LLC)

**8. What was and what is now the master plan for this community, long term, and short term?**

The plan was for 277 total homes (including 25 Townhomes). The current plan calls for 219 homes and 25 townhomes, totaling 244. The village common was to be graded, but will now be left in trees. There will be a community center and swimming pool and the potential for up to 10,000 square feet of commercial space. The entry road RT 650 will be improved to a VDOT standard paved road. The portion of RT 771 on the northern boundary will be relocated and paved. (K.Compton, Courtland-Loudoun, LLC)

**9. What legal recourse do we have at this time with the developer, builder and LCSA for the water and sewage infrastructure?**

More information is needed. In general, LCSA cannot advise you of your legal recourse. (S. Villegas, LCSA)

The infrastructure is 80 percent complete. It is anticipated that the pump and haul will cease by the end of January 2007. The completion of the infrastructure is bonded with the County and with LCSA. (K.Compton, Courtland-Loudoun, LLC)

**10. What legal recourse do homeowners have who purchased premium lots that now have ponds in their backyard?**

More information is needed. In general, LCSA cannot advise you of your legal recourse. (S. Villegas, LCSA)

**11. What is the Transition Policy Area of the Loudoun County Comprehensive General Plan?**

The Transition Policy Area (TPA) is generally located east of Route 621 and west of Route 659. It is an area that serves as a visual transition between the suburban East and the rural West. In 2004, a comprehensive plan amendment was approved allowing central water and sewer into the TPA. (S. Villegas, LCSA)

**12. How much of the current cost for sewage is the developer or builder sharing with the homeowners? Is it 90 percent?**

The developer has paid 77 percent of the total cost of wastewater treatment so far. This percentage will decrease as new residents take over occupancy until 219 homes (90 percent of the homes) are occupied. At that point, all the residents will be sharing the cost of the sewage treatment. (T. Danielson, LCSA)

**13. If the Ritz [Creighton Farms] Golf Course is interested in purchasing our [treated waste] water, how long would it be before this agreement could take place, and how much do they propose it would lower our sewage costs as opposed to the cost of the spray irrigation system?**

Any savings garnered by selling our effluent to the Creighton Farms development will be passed on to Courtland customers through a rate adjustment. LCSA has not made a formal calculation. We're waiting on a Commission Permit currently under review by the County. We do not anticipate its approval before Spring of 2007. An agreement with Creighton Farms has been drafted and will be completed by the time the Commission Permit has been decided upon. (T. Danielson, LCSA)

**14. Why didn't [LCSA] (or the developer, or NV or Ryan) make any attempt to notify us of the public meeting to set the rates? Either a letter or a sign at the entrance to the development would have been informative.**

For every Public Meeting it holds, LCSA notifies the community of the hearing via two Public Notices in newspapers with general circulation serving the area. The Public Notices are also posted conspicuously in the LCSA office lobby and posted to the home page of the LCSA website. LCSA has, in the past, in addition to this, sent letters to affected community members to notify them of Public Hearings. This should have been done for your community, for the six residents who were occupying their homes at the time. For whatever reason, it was not done, and we deeply regret this oversight. Letters will go out to smaller communities for future hearings and notifications. A sign at the entrance to the development is also a great suggestion, and will be implemented from now on as well. (S. Villegas, LCSA)

The developer wasn't aware of the meeting and the developer is also unaware of what effect public input could have on the rates. (K.Compton, Courtland-Loudoun, LLC.)

**15. Why are we paying more for water than other communities? Nothing in the Powerpoint presentation really addresses that issue - it's all about the treatment of sewage. In fact, the bar graph inexplicably leaves out our water charges in relation to other communities.**

The water rates for Courtland residents are the same rates as central system customers. It was left off the Powerpoint because the presentation was about setting sewer rates. We believe your water costs were high due to the expense of establishing new sod. LCSA has seen this before with new developments, and anticipates that these costs will come down once your sod has been established, and through the ongoing practice of wise water use outdoors. (S. Villegas, LCSA)

**16. Since the vast majority of our water usage is for our lawns, can we each get separate meters for the sprinkler systems or outdoor spigots, on the understanding that we will not be charged a sewage treatment fee for that portion of our water usage. Some counties do allow this.**

LCSA policy does not permit submetering (separate meters) for outside irrigation. The central service rate structure addresses this issue by capping sewer at the greater of 30 percent or 6,000 gallons above winter quarter usage. Your current sewer rate structure is different in that it caps sewer use at a higher amount. This enables LCSA to “break-even” on the cost of providing your sewer service. If LCSA were to cap your sewer rates at a lower amount, as is done for central system customers, we would need to raise your consumptive rate to recover the cost of operating the system. LCSA is currently exploring alternative rate structures for our community systems. (S. Villegas, LCSA)

**17. The Powerpoint indicates that our community is supposed to be self-sustaining, including capital replacement of the [waste] water treatment system. Is a portion of our excessive [waste] water fees going towards maintenance of the system, and the eventual replacement, if necessary? If there is some sort of an "escrow" fund for maintenance, who is in charge of the fund, and can we please start getting statements?**

Yes, each Community System is self-sustaining so your wastewater fees – all, not a portion – cover the cost of maintenance of the system and repair and replacement of parts. The fees for your system are collected into our general fund, not a separate “escrow” fund. They are tracked individually using a project account number. LCSA’s Finance Department oversees the budget. I would be amenable to providing the community an annual update of system finances. (T. Danielson, LCSA)

**18. What did the developer, our homeowners association, NV and Ryan know about the probable rates, and when did they know it?**

The developer received the Rate Study prepared by its engineer for LCSA in June of 2002. (K. Compton, Courtland-Loudoun, LLC.)

**19. How can it cost each of us more to use a community system than it would to install and maintain our own wells and septic systems? If you spread the costs out over 20-30 years, it really looks as though a personal system is a much better deal. Where's the group cost savings?**

There isn't necessarily a group cost savings in using a Community System. That was not a driver. One of the main reasons a community system was specified for your community was public health issues due to parcel size. The parcels are actually too small to handle individual wells and onsite treatment systems together. The size creates too much proximity between a well and an on-site system, creating a potential public health issue. The cost of your system is driven by the level of treatment required to protect public and environmental health. Economy of scale also plays a major role in how economical it is on a per household basis.

**Courtland Farms Community Meeting**  
**November 30, 2006**  
**Follow-Up Questions and Answers**

**Q. Why does Courtland Farms have to discharge to a spray field instead of a creek?** Courtland Farms Rural Village is located within the Dulles Area Watershed Policy Area, as determined by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VADEQ). Due to the proximity from water supply intakes downstream, only two wastewater treatment facilities, the Town of Leesburg's and LCSA's Broad Run Water Reclamation Facility, are allowed to discharge in this area. Spray fields were determined to be the best economic option for discharging the effluent from Courtland Rural Village.

**Q. Could we explore alternatives to mowing the spray fields to save on costs, such as selling the grass or letting someone take it for free in exchange for mowing it?** LCSA is actively investigating whether there is any local interest in the grasses. Until we can secure that long-term interest, the mowing will remain as part of the cost of service. Note that removing that cost, which is around \$8,300 per year, only reduces the per household basic charge by about \$8 per quarter.

**Q. Why can't you pipe the effluent across the road, out of the Dulles Area Watershed Policy Area, to avoid the cost of mowing the spray fields?** If LCSA were to pipe the effluent across the road, out of the Policy area, we would incur additional costs for developing that line and incorporating any changes to the treatment system that surface discharge would require. These costs would be passed onto Courtland residents and may potentially offset the savings earned. In addition, LCSA would risk appearing to "skirt the law" in the eyes of the public.

**Q. Why not tie all the community systems together to spread the cost of treatment more evenly over more customers?** This is an ideal scenario and one the LCSA would prefer, however, the County prefers to examine each new subdivision on a case-by-case basis. The County also does not permit LCSA to Master Plan any of the County Rural Policy Area. Due to the variance in the timing of plan approvals and construction projects, it would be nearly impossible for such a coordinated master plan to happen.

**Q. How are the rates calculated? Can we see a breakdown of costs?** Rates are calculated such that LCSA breaks even on the operation and maintenance of the system. The rates are broken into two parts, the Basic Charge and the Consumptive Charge. The Basic Charge includes routine maintenance labor, field mowing, and repair and replacement (R&R). LCSA updated a June 2002 Rate Study, completed by Rickmond Engineering, and concluded that Year 3 costs for the Courtland System would be \$47,000 annually for the Basic Charge. Typically, the first five years of operation are calculated, and the Year 3 cost is used to minimize the frequency of rate increases. The R&R<sup>1</sup> portion of the costs make up the bulk of the Basic Charge (\$36,800), and are calculated by looking at each piece of equipment in the system and determining the lifecycle cost for repair and replacement for 40 years. Almost half the cost of R&R (\$15,000 per year) can

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<sup>1</sup> The total cost for Repair and Replacement, \$36,800, is less than one percent of the total cost of the capital project (\$5 Million).

be attributed to major repairs of the tank and/or pond. The Consumptive Charge was determined to be \$195,000 annually. This charge includes labor for one full-time treatment operator (as required by law), electrical costs, sludge disposal, materials such as chemicals, and other maintenance that may be needed, such as emergency maintenance due to sewer backups, SCADA repairs due to electrical or other failures, specialized equipment testing or calibration, and any other replacements or repairs that are not part of a routine, preventative maintenance program.

The per household Basic Charge and Consumptive Charge are calculated by taking the systems annual totals and dividing them by four (for quarterly billing) and dividing them again by 219 – which is the number of connections when the system is considered to be 90 percent completed. That calculation renders a household quarterly Basic Charge of \$53.60. Applying an average use of 350 gallons per home per day, the Consumptive Charge becomes \$6.96 per 1,000 gallons of sewer service (about \$225 per home per quarter on an annual average).

**Q. How is the 350 gallons for average daily use determined?** LCSA uses 350 gallons per day as an annualized daily household average. This figure was obtained by looking at average daily uses in homes of comparable size in other communities of LCSA's service areas over the last three years.

**Q. The sewer charge is based on an estimate that may not necessarily match our actual average daily use. Why can't you reduce the average daily use in that calculation or submeter our lots?** LCSA could do either of those two things. Any way we set the average use, it must enable us to break even with the Consumptive Cost per household. Lowering the average daily use in the calculation means the Consumptive Charge will need to be higher. For example, if we lower it from 350 to 200 gallons per day, the Consumptive Charge would nearly double to more than \$12 per 1,000 gallons. A consultant for LCSA is currently evaluating the rates we have set for community systems, and will furnish their findings and recommendations to LCSA this spring. The rates will remain as they are until those findings are furnished and reviewed, and any proposed changes to the rates will need to be properly announced and considered through the Public Hearing Process.

**Q. I always thought that with greater technology, costs go down. If this treatment employs such advanced technology, why is it so expensive?** In the water and wastewater treatment field, the more advanced technologies are more expensive. Additionally, VA DEQ generally requires better technologies when they become available in order to better protect the environment. However, it should be noted that the main driver of the cost per household is the relative size of the community. The smaller the community served, the higher the costs will be, since fewer households exist to share the fixed costs equitably.

**Q. Is there any way to decrease the cost of running the plant?** We can work with DEQ to try and reduce the full-time labor they require, but this cannot happen until the plant has been running smoothly for a couple of years. It should be noted, however, that typically, DEQ allows only a few hours reduction weekly, which would not reduce per household costs significantly.