

Somerset Needs Area Sewer Extension

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Version 01 (As of 04/23/2026)

Project Area Questions

1. What roads are included within the Somerset Needs Area?

Austin Farm Drive
Bartlett Road
Catherine Lane
Clara Drive
Doc Ryder Drive
Farmview Drive
Finback Lane
Golfview Drive
Hatch Circle
Hendersons Drive
High Brush Path
Marble Way
Mioxes Way
New Hummock Circle
Sleepy Hollow Road
Smooth Hummocks Way
Swayze Drive
Todd Circle
Bartlett Farm Road
Bartlett Road
Raceway Drive
Somerset Lane
Somerset Road
West Miacomet Road

2. Which roads within the Somerset Needs Area are also within the Hummock Pond watershed area?

The Somerset Needs Area streets within the Hummock Pond Watershed area are:

- a. New Hummock Circle
- b. Austin Farm Drive
- c. A portion of High Brush Path (2–15 High Brush Path)
- d. A portion of Somerset Lane (8–20 Somerset Lane)

A map of the Hummock Pond Watershed is available here:

<https://www.nantucketlandwater.org/watershed-map>

3. Where can I learn more about the environmental drivers of the project?

Additional information on the environmental drivers of the project is available in the following reports:

- a. Hummock Pond MEP: [nantucket-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/6984/Hummock-Pond-Estuary-Plan-PDF](https://www.nantucket-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/6984/Hummock-Pond-Estuary-Plan-PDF)
- b. Miacomet Pond Watershed Study: [nantucket-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/7131/Miacomet-Pond-Watershed-Study-2014-PDF](https://www.nantucket-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/7131/Miacomet-Pond-Watershed-Study-2014-PDF)
- c. Hummock Pond & Miacomet Pond 604b Report: [nantucket-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/15300/Hummock-and-Miacomet-604b-Report---2017-PDF](https://www.nantucket-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/15300/Hummock-and-Miacomet-604b-Report---2017-PDF)

Questions about Connecting to the Sewer

4. Am I required to connect to the sewer line once it becomes available?

Connection to the municipal sewer system is required for properties abutting a sewer line under Sewer Regulation § 336-5 (Building Sewers and Connections) and Board of Health Regulation 336 Attachment 2. Upon completion of construction, property owners that are required to connect to the new sewer will be notified via a letter from the Town that the system is officially approved for use and ready for connection. Property owners will have two years from the date of this notification to connect their existing building(s) to the municipal sewer.

This requirement is driven by the need to protect public health and improve groundwater and surface water quality. Septic systems can release nitrogen, PFAS, pharmaceuticals, and other pollutants into groundwater, which may ultimately impact nearby ponds and coastal waters such as Hummock Pond and Miacomet Pond.

The municipal sewer system provides a higher and more reliable level of treatment, reducing nutrient loading and removing contaminants more effectively than septic systems. Overall, mandatory connection helps prevent long-term environmental damage and supports the health of Nantucket's sensitive water resources.

5. Is a waiver available for properties with Innovative/Alternative (I/A) septic systems, and how long would property owners have to connect?

There is currently no formal waiver policy for properties with Innovative/Alternative (I/A) septic systems. However, the Board of Health has informally agreed to allow up to 15 years from the date of issuance of the Certificate of Compliance (C of C) for connection to sewer. This timeframe is measured from when the I/A system is installed—not when sewer becomes available. For example, if a system received a C of C in 2025 and sewer became available in 2030, the property owner would have 10 years remaining to connect.

This guideline is not formally codified, and variances may be considered by the Board of Health on a case-by-case basis.

For non-I/A (conventional) on-site disposal systems, variances may also be considered in accordance with applicable regulations. Specifically, variances may be granted for systems installed five years or less prior to the installation or completion of a sanitary sewer. In such cases, the variance period may correspond to the remaining portion of that five-year window. For example, if a conventional system was installed two years before sewer becomes available, a variance of up to three years may be granted. All such requests are subject to Board of Health review and approval on a case-by-case basis

6. How many sewer connections will each property receive?

During construction, the Town will install two connection points (stub) at the property line in locations coordinated with the homeowner. Additional tie-ins will be subject to Town approval and the applicable fees.

7. Where does the street sewer stub for connection need to be located?

Prior to construction of the new sewer system in the right-of-way, building connection forms will be mailed to all properties to be connected, giving property owners an opportunity to provide input on the preferred location of their connection stub(s) and to provide elevation information that will help to determine the type of connection required (gravity vs. low pressure/grinder pump) for each dwelling/building.

Property owners are encouraged to seek assistance from their plumber or a local contractor to properly complete the form. In addition, the Town's engineering consultant for this project, Weston & Sampson Engineers, will be available at no cost to property owners for an on-site appointment regarding their building connection location.

8. What is the definition of a dwelling unit?

Per Chapter 139 of Nantucket Zoning code, a dwelling unit is defined as a room or enclosed floor space used, or to be used, as a habitable unit for one family or household, with facilities for sleeping, cooking and sanitation.

9. If a property has multiple septic systems, must each system be connected to the sewer? If so, how are connection fees assessed?

Septic systems cannot be connected to the sewer. All existing septic systems must be properly abandoned, and each dwelling unit must be connected to the municipal sewer system.

Each dwelling unit needs to submit a separate sewer permit application. The current Sewer Connection Permit Application Fee is \$4,000 per dwelling. This fee is due at the time the homeowner submits a sewer connection permit application.

10. Who installs the service connection and, if required, the grinder pumps?

The Sewer Department will make available to homeowners a list of licensed drain layers (contractors) to install the sewer connections and any appurtenances, including grinder pumps. The homeowner is responsible for the costs associated with connecting their property to the municipal sewer system.

Grinder Pump Questions

11. Will properties connecting to the sewer system require a grinder pump, and who typically needs one?

Grinder pumps are used to provide sewer service to areas that cannot be serviced by a gravity sewer, typically due to topographic elevation issues. Below are two scenarios where a grinder pump may be required:

- Areas of rolling topography or individual roadways that fall off significantly in elevation are good candidates for grinder pumps and low-pressure sewers. In areas where low-pressure sewers are required to reduce excavation depths, grinder pumps are needed to transfer the flow to the low-pressure sewer mains.
- Properties with buildings that are at elevations lower than that of the roadway surface will also likely require a grinder pump, even if there is a gravity sewer main in the roadway.

Additional information on grinder pump requirements can be found in [Town regulation § 336-5 \(Building Sewers and Connections\)](#). <https://ecode360.com/39464763#39464763>

12. How do I select a grinder pump?

Once the project moves forward to construction, the Town will coordinate with grinder pump manufacturers to supply the grinder pump systems. Once a manufacturer is selected, the Town will pre-purchase the units and property owners that require a grinder pump will be notified of the process to obtain the units once the sewer connection permit application has been approved. Property owners will not be permitted to install grinder pumps that are not approved by the Town.

13. Where does the pump need to be located, what is the pipe size, and what type of tank will be used?

If your property requires a low-pressure sewer connection and grinder pump unit, the grinder pump and integral pump tank (constructed of high-density polyethylene or fiberglass reinforced plastic - sizes vary) are typically installed close to the home, because the pipe feeding wastewater to the grinder pump system from the home must flow by gravity into the grinder pump system. This distance should be minimized, but is typically within 10-feet from the dwelling. A grinder pump will not be permitted to be

installed inside a dwelling. Typically, the pipe size from the home to the grinder pump system is 4-inches in diameter and the size of the discharge pipe exiting the grinder pump system is 1-1/2 inches in diameter.

14. Can one grinder pump service multiple parcels?

While there are different size pumping systems that may handle multiple parcels, those are not the type of units proposed for this project. For this project, each dwelling unit with a sewer connection on the property will be required to have a separate grinder pump unit.

15. Can an existing grinder pump be tied into the new sewer system?

Re-use of existing installed grinder pumps may be allowed on a case by case basis, only with approval of the Nantucket Sewer Department.

Project Cost Questions

16. What is the projected cost of the Project?

At the upcoming 2026 Annual Town Meeting on May 4, 2026, the Town is requesting an appropriation of \$44,800,000 under 2026 ATM Article 15 to fund construction of the project. Of the \$44,800,000, \$36,800,000 is allocated for sewer-related construction. The remaining costs are allocated for new water mains, drainage improvements, roadway improvements, and new multi-use paths.

17. What cost recovery methods are being considered by the Town for the sewer construction portion of the project?

The Town is evaluating the use of the following mechanisms to recover up to 25% of the capital sewer construction costs from properties that will be served by the project:

- **Betterments:** A charge assessed by a municipality under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 80 to property owners whose properties receive a benefit from a public improvement, such as the construction or extension of sewer. Betterment costs are based the final cost of sewer construction and calculated based on projected wastewater flow. Payment is required at the time of final completion of sewer construction and may be paid upfront or apportioned over time, up to 20 years.
- **Sewer Capacity Fees (SCF):** Fee assessed by the Town for new sewer connections or property changes that increase the potential flow to the municipal sewer system. The fee helps recover the cost of providing sewer system capacity and is calculated based on projected wastewater flow. Payment is required before a sewer connection permit is issued and may be paid upfront or apportioned over time. For additional information, please refer to Town Sewer Regulation § 336 Article II, Exhibit 4-5.

The Finance Committee's motion to Article 15 authorizes the Select Board, acting as the Board of Sewer Commissioners, to assess up to 25% of sewer extension project costs on the owners of land to be served by the new sewers pursuant to the mechanisms listed above. Of the two above mechanisms, Betterments can be used to cover expenses associated with construction, while the SCF is used to cover expenses associated with Wastewater Treatment Facility operations.

18. What is the cost of the Sewer Connection Permit Application Fee?

The current Sewer Connection Permit Application Fee is \$4,000 per dwelling. This fee is due at the time the homeowner submits a sewer connection permit application.

19. What is a Sewer Capacity Fee (SCF)?

A fee assessed by the Town for new sewer connections or property changes that increase the potential flow to the municipal sewer system. The fee helps recover the cost of providing sewer system capacity and is calculated based on projected wastewater flow. Payment is required before a sewer connection permit is issued and may be paid upfront or apportioned over time. For additional information, please refer to Town Sewer Regulation § 336 Article II, Exhibit 4-5.

20. What is the estimated cost for a typical three-bedroom home if betterments or the Sewer Capacity Fee are used to recover up to 25% of the sewer capital construction costs?

The estimated cost for either betterments or an adjusted SCF to recover up to 25% of the capital sewer construction costs from the properties served, results in an estimated betterment or SCF cost of approximately \$20,000 to \$25,000 for a typical three-bedroom home.

21. Who is responsible for covering the costs associated with connecting to the sewer system, and what are the estimated total costs for connecting to the new sewer line or service stub?

The homeowner is responsible for all costs associated with connecting their property to the municipal sewer system. The total cost to connect to the new sewer system generally includes three components:

- a. **Sewer Connection Permit Application Fee:** Currently \$4,000 per dwelling, due at the time of permit application.
- b. **Sewer Capacity Fee:** Estimated at \$20,000–\$25,000 for a typical three-bedroom home, based on the Town's plan to recover up to 25% of capital construction costs. Adjustments apply for homes with additional bedrooms or higher wastewater flow. Homeowners may request to apportion the SCF through the Sewer Commissioners, allowing the fee to be added to their property tax bill and paid over a period of up to 20 years.

- c. **Private Contractor/Engineering Costs:** Costs associated with the construction of the sewer service piping from the existing building to the sewer service connection located at the edge of the right-of-way (including decommissioning of the existing septic system to meet Board of Health requirements). The cost of on-lot service connections will vary significantly, depending upon the distance of the dwelling to the sewer service connection located in the travelled way, the type of service to be installed (gravity vs. low-pressure), and the extent of landscaping and surface restoration needed on the property. Each sewer connection requires an engineer's stamped plan of the connection to be submitted to the Sewer Department for approval. Only approved installers or licensed Massachusetts plumbers can perform the work of approved sewer application permits.

Because connections are not expected for at least three years, contractor costs cannot be estimated reliably at this time due to changing conditions and market factors.

22. Can any one of these Fees be paid over time?

Sewer Capacity Fee: Homeowners may submit a request to the Sewer Commissioners to allow the homeowner to apportion the SCF, allowing the fee to be added to their property tax bill and paid over a period of up to 20 years, at 4.4% per year/amortized. If paying overtime, the owner must pay at least 10% of the fee up front and sign a Voluntary Lien Agreement which gets recorded at the Registry of Deeds. The remaining amount is added to the tax bill and paid in annual installments for a period not to exceed twenty years.

Betterments: May be paid in full upfront or apportioned over time, allowing the betterment to be added to the property tax bill and paid over a period of up to 20 years.

The Sewer Connection Permit Application Fee must be paid up front.

23. How many separate sewer line connections are required for properties with multiple dwelling units? Are separate Sewer Connection Permit Application Fees required? How is the Sewer Capacity Fee (SCF) calculated—per property or per dwelling unit?

Each dwelling unit on a property is required to have its own sewer service pipe from the house to the sewer service stub left at the property line. However, if installing a separate line is not feasible, a shared sewer service may be permitted. This would need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis and is subject to approval by the Sewer Department and Plumbing Inspector. See Town regulation § 336-5 (Building Sewers and Connections).

Costs:

- A separate Sewer Connection Permit Application Fee is required for each dwelling unit or separate plumbed structure.
- The Sewer Capacity Fee (SCF) is assessed as a one-time fee based on the total number of bedrooms across all buildings on the property (i.e., calculated cumulatively per property, not per individual building).

24. What is a typical sewer user fee and how is it calculated?

Sewer user fees are assessed to all connected properties to cover the annual cost of operating and maintaining the Town sewer system and Wastewater Treatment Facilities. Individual user fees are based on water use and are billed quarterly. Currently this fee averages approximately \$1,200 per year for a typical single family residential home. For properties with private water (a well), there is a fixed sewer user fee of \$273.16 per quarter for dwellings with up to 3 bedrooms and \$455.54 per quarter for dwellings with over 3 bedrooms.

25. What are the potential costs of replacing an individual septic system if the project is not approved?

The Board of Health has provided estimated costs for replacing a septic system for a typical four-bedroom home, based on recent applications submitted through the Town’s septic loan program. Recent estimated costs are as follows:

- Conventional septic system: approximately \$50,000–\$60,000
- Innovative/Alternative (IA) system: approximately \$80,000–\$100,000

Actual costs may vary depending on site conditions, system design requirements, and market pricing at the time of installation.

26. Are there any loan programs or financial assistance options available to property owners?

Yes. The Nantucket Health Department offers financial assistance for sewer connection work through the Septic Betterment Loan Program. This program provides eligible property owners with access to low-interest loans to help cover the cost of required sewer connections and related wastewater improvements.

More information is available here:

<https://nantucket-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/975/Septic-Loan-Program-Information-Brochure-PDF?bidId=>

Questions about Existing Septic Systems

27. Why do septic systems need to be abandoned or decommissioned when connecting to sewer, and what does the process involve, including associated costs?

The homeowner will be responsible for decommissioning their existing septic systems to prevent possible safety issues associated with collapses of abandoned systems in the future. Abandoning a septic system involves a regulated process overseen by the Health Department. The property owner must submit a septic abandonment application and

arrange for a Health Department representative to be present during the work. The process generally includes pumping out the septic tank, then either removing it or rendering it unusable by breaking or opening the bottom. The tank and any associated infiltration structures are then filled with clean sand. In some cases, contractors may use “flowable fill” (a liquid sand material), especially when excavation is difficult or to minimize disruption to landscaping.

Costs for decommissioning a septic tank vary depending on site conditions, access, and method used, but typically include permitting fees, pumping, labor, and materials.

More information is available here:

<https://www.nantucket-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/11104/Application-for-Septic-Abandonment-PDF>

28. Can homeowners use existing septic tanks for the installation of the grinder pump instead of a complete new grinder pump chamber?

The reuse of existing septic tanks as part of the sewer connection is not allowed due to condition concerns of existing septic tanks that are subject to failure over time. Grinder pump units will be provided in their own integral enclosure/tank for installation in the ground.

Construction Schedule and Impact Questions

29. What is the anticipated schedule/timeframe for the project?

- **May 4, 2026 | Annual Town Meeting** - Annual Town Meeting vote on funding for construction under 2026 ATM Article 15
- **May 19, 2026 | Annual Town Election** - Town Election vote on Ballot Question 5 to authorize construction funding
- **October 2026** - Final design documents completed and submitted for regulatory review
- **January 2027** - Final construction contract documents prepared and advertised for bidding, following regulatory review and approval
- **Spring 2027** - Construction begins
- **Spring 2029** - Anticipated completion of construction

*No roadway construction will commence during the Summer of 2027 and 2028 (typically Memorial Day to Labor Day) to minimize disruption.

30. How will the Town select contractors to perform the construction work for the project?

The Town will follow all applicable Massachusetts Public Procurement Laws to develop and advertise the bidding opportunity. For further information on public procurement laws

and guidelines, please visit the Town Procurement Information Page (<https://www.nantucket-ma.gov/199/Procurement>)

31. Will I have access to my house during construction of the project?

Yes, however there may be temporary vehicle access limitations on certain streets during construction. Notification of these limitations will be given in advance whenever possible. The Contractor will be required to close excavations or install steel plates at the end of each construction day to allow traffic to pass after hours. There is continued coordination throughout the design phase of the project with police, fire, emergency and school busing departments and there is a traffic management plan for the project that will be in place during construction along with continued coordination. To keep interested parties updated during construction, mailings and flyers, the Town website and social media sites will have regular updates on the project's progress and areas of work. Available information on roadway detours will also be included in these regular updates.

32. Will all roads be paved upon completion of construction?

The Town will restore the affected roads but will not change the existing surface material of the road. Unpaved roads will remain unpaved, paved roads will be re-paved to the same width as the pre-existing pavement.

33. Will water service be extended to the project area?

Yes. Town water mains will be installed along all streets within the project area that do not currently have municipal water. Once the project is completed, if the property owner wants to connect to Town water, the property owner will need to contact Wannacomet Water to inquire about connection requirements. The homeowner is responsible for all costs associated with connecting their property to the municipal water system.

Planning, Zoning, and Voting Questions

34. For this Article to be passed at the May 4, 2026 Annual Town Meeting (ATM), how many people will need to vote in favor?

Article 15 will require a 2/3rds affirmative vote at Annual Town Meeting because it is an appropriation subject to borrowing; and a simple majority affirmative vote at the May 19, 2026 Annual Town Election.

35. What is the maximum development potential under current zoning regulations within this area?

Maximum development potential is best evaluated on a property-by-property basis rather than for the area as a whole. For an individual lot, development potential depends on applicable zoning requirements, including setbacks, ground cover limits, and the number of allowable structures. These factors can vary between properties and require a detailed review to determine accurately. Additionally, development potential may be subject to

change based on future Town Meeting decisions, including potential updates to Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) requirements. It should be noted that current septic capacity limitations may restrict development potential.

Affordability Covenants

36. Will properties with existing affordability covenants retain their covenant designation after connecting to the sewer?

Connecting to sewer does not change or remove the existing covenant.

37. Are there financial assistance programs specifically available for affordable or covenant-restricted properties?

The Select Board's sewer waiver policy allows the Select Board, acting as the Sewer Commissioners, to, in its discretion, waive all or a portion of the sewer connection fee for dwelling units subject to a permanent affordable housing covenant.