

Letter to the Editor

## **Banning community Sewer systems not just a tool to control growth**

**Submitted by George "Jody" Sweeney  
Candidate for 5<sup>th</sup> District Levy Court**

Kent County Levy Court has again voted with the will of the majority of residents in the county. The recent vote to ban community sewer systems was viewed by many supporters as a tool to control growth outside the growth zone. Most opponents of the ban viewed the decision as criticism of the systems that they install and maintain.

I am sure that Artesian Water and Tidewater Utilities are very efficient at installing and maintaining these systems, but the ordinance was not written to ensure that only "competent" companies are allowed to install these systems. Without the ban, any company could install these systems. As we have seen with the out of state developers who build using inferior materials, when the homeowners start to realize the low quality of what they have purchased, the developer is long gone. When inferior community sewer systems fail, the resulting environmental damage is a disaster.

Community sewer systems must be continually monitored to ensure that they are handling the volume of waste from attached homes and that equipment has not failed. Homeowners pay a premium for this service, usually to a company like Artesian or Tidewater. In some cases, the homeowners associations are responsible for monitoring the treatment plant.

In doing research, one by-product of jurisdictions allowing community sewer systems has been the development of Community Sewer System Loan Programs. From Rhode Island to Oregon, these programs are developed to provide low interest loans to homeowner associations for expansion of over-burdened systems or to repair failed systems. The first qualification on most of the loan applications for this type of loan is that "The system must have failed." This fact supports the idea that these systems are prone to failure.

The failure of an individual onsite septic system is the responsibility of the homeowner to repair and cleanup, absent a warrantee from the installer. Very rarely is someone other than the homeowner inconvenienced by this failure. The failure of a community wastewater system, if the installer was not a reputable company, will affect the homeowners physically and financially. If the county or state must development a Delaware version of the Community Sewer System Loan Program, every taxpayer will now be affected.

The suggested compromise of banning these systems outside the growth zone and allowing them inside the growth zone until they can be converted to county sewer is the best solution. The ban is used as a tool to force growth inside the growth zone, and the few developments that do have a community sewer system inside the growth zone are only temporary. If the compromise can not be worked out, keep the ban.