

StreamLine



VRWA CONFERENCE 2019 Highlights

INSIDE: OSHA RECORD KEEPING • AVOIDING DISCHARGE MONITORING REPORT ERRORS • LIMITING WATER LOSS • COMPETENCE OR COMPETENCY? • THE WATER INFRASTRUCTURE ACT • THE TOWN OF AMHERST • THE 2018 FARM BILL • WORKING TOGETHER • CONSOLIDATION SAVES A SMALL WATERWORKS



Sustainability is Alive and Well in the Town of Amherst

BY RODNEY McCLAIN, WASTEWATER TECHNICIAN #2

The Town of Amherst serves as a model of a community that has created and nurtured a culture that meets the ever-demanding needs of providing the most essential services to their citizens.

THE TOWN OF Amherst, population 2,200, is proud of the Garlic Festival in October and one of the first roundabout traffic circles in Virginia. The town and its citizens can also be proud of its utilities' systems thanks to the teamwork of the operators, construction and maintenance field staff, customer service staff, Director of Plants, town manager and town Council members. Without all of these critical pieces of the puzzle working together, utilities can fall victim to aging deterioration and ultimately failure that results in the inability to provide their citizens with the critical service of safe and reliable water and wastewater service.

Amherst constructed its advance nutrient removal 0.600MGD wastewater treatment plant in 2005, in anticipation of the Chesapeake Bay Nutrient Reduction initiative. Their current average daily flow is 0.250MGD, providing them capacity for growth. Utilizing the Kruger Oxidation Ditch system followed by tertiary filtration and UV disinfection, Amherst has consistently met its stringent effluent limits. Amherst still uses sand drying beds for biosolids dewatering because they have converted the original 1975 WWTP aeration basins into aerobic digestors, providing them with adequate holding capacity. Clever.

The collection system consists of 20 miles of varying age and materials. The town has an ongoing annual budgeting process to rehabilitate/replace a percentage of their collection system.

This is possible because the town adopted a policy years ago to establish, fund and maintain an annual contingency fund and build a \$1 million reserve fund to address the inevitable replacement and upgrade of their major infrastructure assets. By means of establishing the reserve fund, Amherst will be able to borrow LESS money for future capital improvement projects, which translates into LESS financial burden on their citizens in the future. Smart.

Operators and maintenance personnel, the boots on the ground day-to-day, absolutely understand the criticality of asset management and sustainability. Unfortunately, sometimes the ultimate enablers, town management and council members have neither the political will or the vision to enact, fund and support their utility professionals.





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Kudos to the staff that contributed to this article: Fred Adams, Operator OIT; Gary Smith Jr., Wastewater Operator, WW2, W3 Licenses; Gary Williams, Director of Plants, WW1, W2 Licenses; Sara Carter, Town Manager, W4 License; Ken Watts, Utilities Committee Chairman. ♠



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