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Mooresville utilities prepared to handle growth, town officials say

By [Megan Pillow](#) | Mooresville Tribune

Mooresville officials say developers need not worry about the town's ability to provide utility services to potential projects. Mooresville, they say, is more than ready to cope with the area's growth.

At an agenda briefing Wednesday morning, Public Services Director John Vest told commissioners that demand on the town's 5.2 million gallons per day (mgd) wastewater treatment plant has "remained relatively steady over the past year."

The plant's actual flow, said Vest, is about 58 percent of capacity and its allocated, or promised, flow is at about 93 percent.

While that might sound high, said Vest, other plans have been in the works for some time now to help alleviate the long-term demands on the plant and to help the town plan for the future. The plant, he said, has been rerated to be allowed to accept 300,000 gallons per day more and a 2 mgd package plant is scheduled to begin construction in late fall 2009, with an estimated completion date of the spring or summer 2011.

At that point, said Vest, "we'll be up to 7 ½" mgd.

Added Town Manager Steve Husemann, "I think the key here is that we are ready for development as it comes along. I think we're in really good shape here."

In November 2007, Mooresville was looking at something akin to a wastewater crisis. At the time, the town was on target to max out the capacity of the 5.2 mgd plant by 2010, and the town's proposed \$143.5 million, 15 mgd Rocky River Wastewater Treatment Plant was not scheduled to go online until 2012.

The town approved design firm CH2M Hill to begin work on a three-phase plan to cope with the situation, including the rerating of the current plant, a "stop-gap" 2 to 4 mgd measure, and the seeking of state permits for the larger plant. The firm was also asked to look into regionalization options for providing wastewater services, on which the board heard an informational presentation earlier this year and is now taking into consideration.

In late November 2007, the town also temporarily suspended granting sewer permits until the town was able to come up with a plan for how to allocate future capacity.

Now, say officials, an allocation policy, the rerating of the current plant and a firm timeline for the 2 mgd plant are all in place, and because of the struggling economy, growth has also, for the moment, slowed.

Vest said Wednesday that the town can consider its next step in the process — the proposed 15 mgd plant — once the town's new utility master plan is complete sometime in the next four to five months.

Another important accomplishment, said Mayor Bill Thunberg, is that the town has been working closely with the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NC DENR) to make the approval process go smoothly for the town's wastewater projects.

The town, he said, checks in with DENR every month on its progress.

"We've given them everything they need to be comfortable with how we allocate," he said. "That's the gap we've closed — the confidence gap."

Vest said a project like the long-discussed Lake Davidson Village, a 650-home and office development proposed by K. Hovnanian Homes for the north shore of Lake Davidson, will require the construction of the Mount Mourne outfall, but the town is working with the DENR to "begin the

regulatory process once the (2 mgd) package plant is in construction."

So far, Lake Davidson Village is a project still in process, said Vest. "No firm actual plan has even been submitted yet," he said. Once a plan is submitted, he said, it could take about two years to go through the process. Still, he said, the project could be completed by 2011.

Commissioner Chris Carney said he was glad to hear the news about Lake Davidson Village, which he said could be a valuable "corporate campus" for the area.

"It's interesting that we're saying that it's still a viable piece of property," he said.

In addition, said Carney, he was glad to hear that Mooresville was sending a message that it is ready to accept new growth in general.

Mayor Bill Thunberg said the overall picture Vest painted indicates that Mooresville is, in fact, "open for business."

"I think the key is, not only do we have capacity, we're prepared for the foreseeable future," he said.

Added Commissioner Miles Atkins, "so essentially, we're not holding anybody up."

"We're in great shape," said Thunberg. "It's well-managed and we're ready for any projects that people want to bring our way."

The Mooresville town board will hold their monthly meeting on Monday, Dec. 1 at 6 p.m. at Mooresville Town Hall.