

Parsippany sewer plant to be made more energy efficient

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Eugene Paik/For The Star-Ledger

PARSIPPANY -- The township's nearly 38-year-old sewage treatment plant is about to undergo its first massive overhaul in decades.

Groundbreaking is set for Friday for a project that will upgrade the plant's technology and scale back its high energy costs.

"I'm very excited," Council President Ann Grossi said. "It's a way for us to lower sewer fees."

According to Phil Bober, the plant's acting superintendent, the renovation could result in at least \$900,000 a year in energy savings. About \$1.8 million is spent powering the facility annually, he said.

Town officials say that the plant, with customers also in Montville, Mountain Lakes, East Hanover and Denville, is one of the largest consumers of power in the northeast United States.

The overhaul will reduce the number of tanks in the facility and swap out its outdated technology, which dates back to the plant's opening in 1972.

Escalating energy costs are why Parsippany had spent years calling for changes to the facility, which can treat 16 million gallons of wastewater a day.

Council President Ann Grossi blamed those costs for a 52 percent hike in sewage charges for customers in 2006--the third increase in three years.

After more than three years of planning, the township council last month approved a \$21 million bid from the South Kearny-based Spectraserv to move forward with the project.

The work should be completed in December 2011. Parsippany is also pursuing state and federal funds to cover some of the cost.

While the upgrade is progressing, a separate project at the plant has stalled.

Town officials want to hand over two dormant incinerators at the plant to a private company. The proposal was viewed as a money-making venture for Parsippany, which shut down the burners several years ago because it was

cheaper to ship out sewage remnants.

The township began its search for suitors last spring but only one company, the Houston-based Synagro, responded. The township is still negotiating with the company, said Robert Strechay, the town's utilities director.

"We expected more, but I guess (the project requires) a specialized process," he said.

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