

Suffolk lawmakers set to vote on requiring advanced septic systems for new construction

By Denise Civiletti
Sep 2, 2020, 5:43 pm

<https://riverheadlocal.com/2020/09/02/suffolk-lawmakers-set-to-vote-on-requiring-advanced-septic-systems-for-new-construction/>



A Hydro-Action advanced wastewater treatment system.

New homes built in unsewered areas of Suffolk County next year will be required to have innovative nitrogen-reducing wastewater systems rather than traditional septic systems as of next July, if a proposed amendment to the Sanitary Code is approved by county legislators.

The proposed code change will also require the installation of an advanced wastewater system for “other construction” projects — condominiums, two-family and multifamily housing and commercial or industrial centers. The new systems will also be required for expansion of single-family or other construction projects where the expansion requires addition to or modification of sewage disposal facilities. The requirement is also triggered for other construction projects where a change of use requires the installation of new sewage disposal facilities or increased capacity of existing sewage disposal facilities.

The code change was unanimously approved by the county Board of Health in July.

On Monday, the county legislature’s Environment, Parks and Agriculture Committee voted to send the measure to the full legislature without recommendation.

Introductory Resolution 1643, adopting the changes to the county’s sanitary code, will be on the agenda of the legislature’s Wednesday, Sept. 9 general meeting.

The code amendment aims to address nitrogen pollution in Suffolk’s groundwater and surface waters by requiring advanced onsite septic systems that remove nitrogen from wastewater before it is discharged to groundwater.

The proposal is supported by a host of environmental advocacy groups, including Group for the East End, New York League of Conservation Voters, The Nature Conservancy, Peconic Baykeeper, Save the Sound, Peconic Estuary Partnership and Defend H2O.

It is also supported by the Long Island Builders Institute, but with its request to delay the effective date of the new requirement and a focus on priority areas.

LIBI also recommended the county require an upgrade to advanced onsite wastewater treatment systems on property transfer — but the current proposal does not require that.

County officials estimate that there are more than 380,000 onsite wastewater systems in Suffolk, with more than 252,500 of them predating the requirement for a septic tank.

The cost of an innovative onsite system is roughly \$18,000 “on average,” according to North Fork Legislator Al Krupski.

The county just authorized \$3.7 million in grant money for the purchase and installation of these systems, Krupski said.

Editor’s note: this article was amended post-publication to clarify the application of the proposed sanitary code changes, which will affect new construction of condominiums, two-family and multifamily housing as well as commercial and industrial centers and, under some circumstances, additions to existing single-family homes and commercial projects.