

East Hampton Unveils New CPF Water Quality Law

By Michael Wright

East Hampton became the first East End town to unveil the first draft of its retooled Community Preservation Fund law that will, if approved by voters in November, allow the town to start using some of the tens of millions raised from real estate transfer taxes for water quality improvement projects—including a residential septic system replacement subsidy program.

Under the new CPF statute, the town would create a project plan listing priority projects, from septic upgrades to stormwater runoff abatement to habitat restoration, that would each then have to be subject to a public hearing before being approved for funding. Pollution prevention and abatement projects could also be considered and the town could use some of the money for subsidies to help homeowners pay to upgrade septics or cesspools at their homes.

East Hampton formed a committee last fall that began work on detailing what sort of projects should be the focus of CPF funding, from a 2-percent tax on most real estate sales, if and when it becomes available.

Like with the CPF's land acquisition process, all projects will have to be approved by the town board and vetted at public hearings. All proposed projects must be consistent with regional water quality protection plans and any infrastructure projects funded with the money would have to have an expected lifespan of at least five years, according to the draft law released on Tuesday.

The town will finalize its draft and put the proposal up for a public hearing later this month or next month and must adopt the law by August to ensure it is on the November ballot.

Like the original CPF law and the 2009 extension through 2030, this latest extension of the CPF, through 2050, will require majority support from voters.

If approved, the law would extend the entire CPF program another 20 years and would not require that the town spend any of the money raised on water quality projects.

All five East End towns are expected to adopt similar CPF extensions, and propose ballot measures to allow up to 20 percent of their annual CPF revenues to go to water quality projects.

In 2015, East Hampton Town took in \$28.5 million through its CPF fund, meaning that about \$2.8 million of that would have been available for water quality work. The town would also be allowed to contribute up to 10 percent of its water quality funding total in a given year to regional partnership projects with other towns for work that could have beneficial impacts across the region.