



NEWEA / NYWEA
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Mystic, CT



The Art of Public Outreach within the Science of Wastewater

Successful Communications Strategy for Passing a Sewer Referendum

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Outline: Enfield & the Art of Public Outreach

- **Background:**
 - Facts about the Town of Enfield & the sewer program
- **Solution:**
 - How Enfield engaged the public to gain support
- **Key Points:**
 - What are effective public outreach tools?
 - Results

About the Town of Enfield...

- Population ~45,000
- North Central Connecticut – suburb of Springfield, MA (9 miles)
- Median household income ~ \$66,000
- Form of Government – Mayor with (large) Town Council



Enfield WPCA

- The Enfield Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA)
 - Authority comprises the Town Council
 - Water Pollution Control Facility permitted to 10 MGD
 - Effluent is discharged to the Connecticut River
 - Collection system built in 1938, WPCF built in 1972
 - 16 pumping stations & 250 miles of sewer pipe
 - > 95% of the homes / businesses are connected to sewer



Fun fact: Enfield is home to the U.S. headquarters of the Danish company Lego!



Challenge: Funding Pressures

- Enfield funded its sewer program through a portion of the local property tax
 - *Ad Valorem* tax structure
 - Each capital improvement project put pressure on the Town's budget and Mill Rate



VS.



Background: Capital Improvements Are Needed

- Enfield's sewer system required *significant* capital improvements
 - Portions of the collection system were installed in the 1930s
 - A majority of the equipment at the WWTF had been in service for 40+ years



- Enfield funded repairs through the operations & maintenance budgets
 - *However, emergency repairs often cost 2-3 times more than planned capital improvements*



November 2015 Referenda in Enfield

- School Project (\$44M in School Improvements)
 - Security, code updates (plumbing, electrical, etc.), modernization
- Energy Project (\$11.2M in Capital Improvements)
 - Would be repaid by savings through performance contract
- Sewer Project (\$36M Capital improvements)
 - Treatment plant, pump stations, & collection system

*SEWER has to compete with
SCHOOLS & ENERGY!?!?*



Solution: Solve the Financial Challenge First

To successfully engage the public, you have to successfully answer the financial questions!

- **Change the funding structure to a user fee system**
 - Usage charges are more equitable
- **Capture funding to reduce user costs**
- **Pass a \$36 million sewer referendum**
 - Rate structure included capital improvement costs

To earn public support for these changes, Enfield implemented a diverse public outreach strategy...



Public Outreach: Why Do Any Public Outreach?

- Get information out quickly
- Personalize your organization
- Reach a larger audience
- Be a part of the conversation
- Learn from your customer



Public Utilities are learning the hard way: It is better to be out in front with your message & lead the customer.

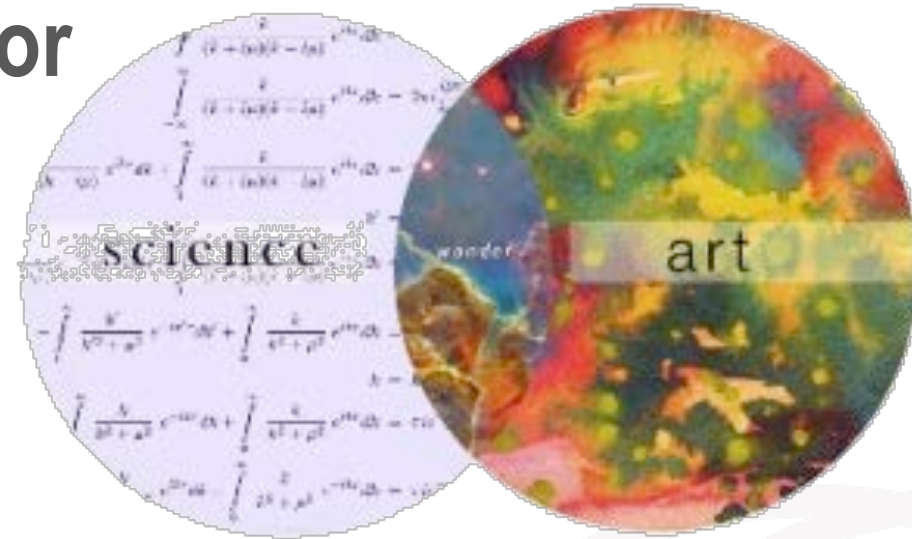
Who do you want leading the conversation when a crisis hits??? You, or your customer?



How: Implement a Diverse Public Outreach Strategy

Why is Public Outreach so challenging for utilities?

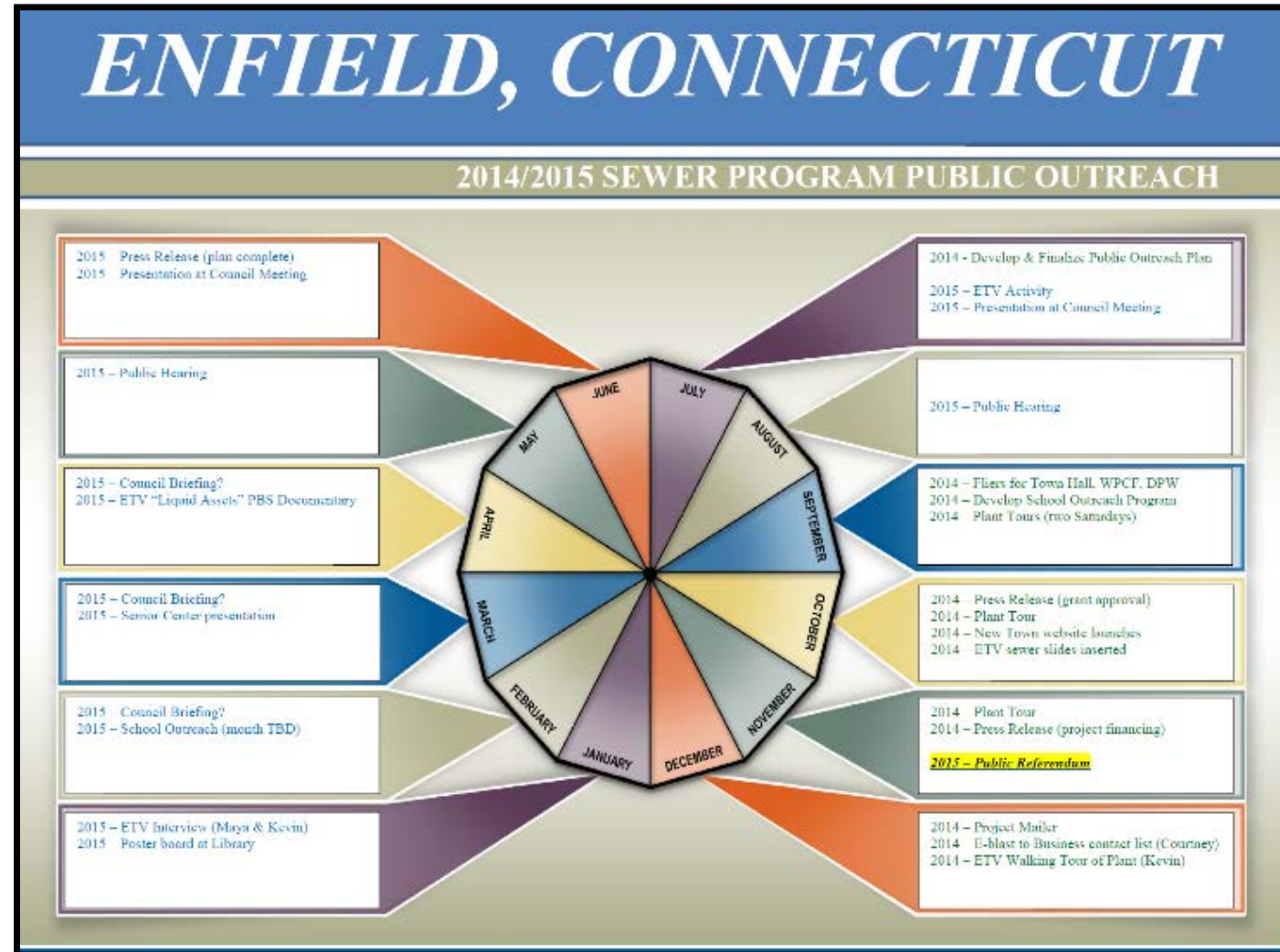
- Technical people prefer to work with facts & known quantities
 - Wastewater professionals look to engineering, science, & biology
 - Public outreach strategy is much more loose & undefined
- Outreach requires time, focused effort & investment
- Campaigns must be tailored to each situation & local climate



Public Outreach: What are the Options?

- Develop a plan that includes:
 - Goals
 - Schedule
 - Matrix of Options
 - Responsible parties

Research how many votes you need. This guides how many people you must reach thru the outreach program...



Public Outreach: What are the Options?

■ Options must be varied across multiple mediums

- Social media
- Web
- Email
- Print
- Word-of-Mouth
- Door-to-Door
- TV
- Posters
- and many more options...

| Public Participation / Outreach Work Plan | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| DRAFT MATRIX OF COMMUNICATIONS | | | | |
| ACTION | HOW CONDUCTED | SCHEDULE | AUDIENCE | DURATION |
| Dedicated Website Page on Town's Website at https://www.enfield-ct.gov/content/91/50777/default.aspx | Site hosts project information with continual updates. Expand to interactive participations for Q&A and comments? | Continual - always accessible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxpayers • Sewer ratepayers • Business community • Economic development targets • General population | Throughout entire project. Accessibility is immediate |
| Social Media (I.e. Twitter) | DPW Director to provide project updates on a routine milestone basis | Periodic updates (no less than monthly) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxpayers • Sewer ratepayers • Business community • Economic development targets • General population | Throughout entire project. Accessibility is immediate & proactive |
| Public Workshops via Town Council Meetings | Presentation conducted at public locale | As Needed Typically At Project Milestones and/or Before Major Filings | Interested parties Town Departments | Periodically throughout project |
| Direct Mailings | Printed materials added to sewer bills | Target Fall 2014 & and/or before Fall 2015 Town Meeting | Targeted addresses or all ratepayers | Periodic updates |
| School Education | Classroom Presentations | 2014-2015 Academic Year | Children | Periodic Visits |
| FUTURE COMMUNICATIONS OPTIONS | | | | |
| E-TV Enfield – All the Time | Cable TV show dedicated to Project | Periodic Updates | All town residents with cable TV | On an as needed basis with project milestones |
| "FRONT & CENTER" Senior Center News Release – | Project Updates in senior newsletter at http://enfield-ct.gov | Monthly Newsletter | Primarily seniors | Newsletter is published once a month |
| Enfield Patch on-line news Enfield Patch Blog | Article Update or Blog at enfield.patch.com/ | Continual Access | All who work with electronic devices- computers, smartphones, iPhones, iPads, etc. | Throughout entire project. Accessibility is immediate |

Public Outreach: The Accelerated Pace of Change

Online & social media is where people are – and it's not going away!

■ Over 75% of all Internet users use social media*

- 77% Facebook
- 63% YouTube
- 25% LinkedIn
- 21% use Twitter



■ Facebook has over 1.5 billion monthly users

■ YouTube has over 1 billion monthly users



* <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/12-social-media-facts-statistics-know-2016/>

Public Outreach: The Accelerated Pace of Change

Online & social media is where people are – and it's not going away!

- The typical digital consumer spends 1 hour & 49 minutes /day on social networks/messaging services**
 - \approx 1 in every 3 minutes spent online is devoted to social media



Public Outreach: Choose the Right Platform

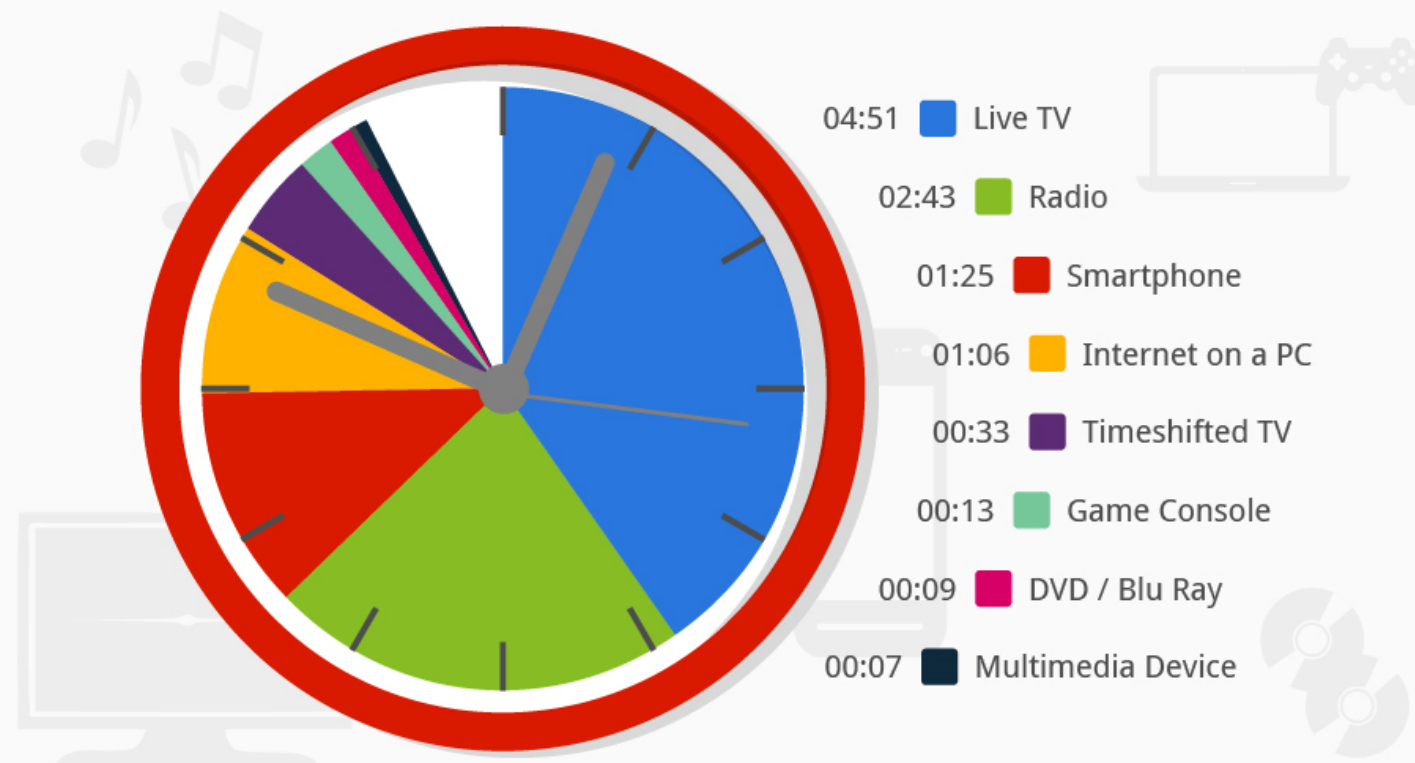
- What about Email?
 - 72% of U.S. adults still prefer communication with organizations thru email
 - Email is the only digital channel that outperforms old media standbys
- And traditional media?
 - 48% prefer postal mail
 - 34% television ads
 - 31% print media (e.g. magazines and newspapers)
- However...the media landscape is shifting!
 - 60% of those aged 55 and older like to communicate by postal mail
 - 29% of millennials say the same



Public Outreach: Where Are Your Customers?

Americans Use Electronic Media 11+ Hours A Day

Average time American adults (18+) spent with electronic media in Q4 2014 (hours:minutes)



@StatistaCharts

Source: Nielsen

statista

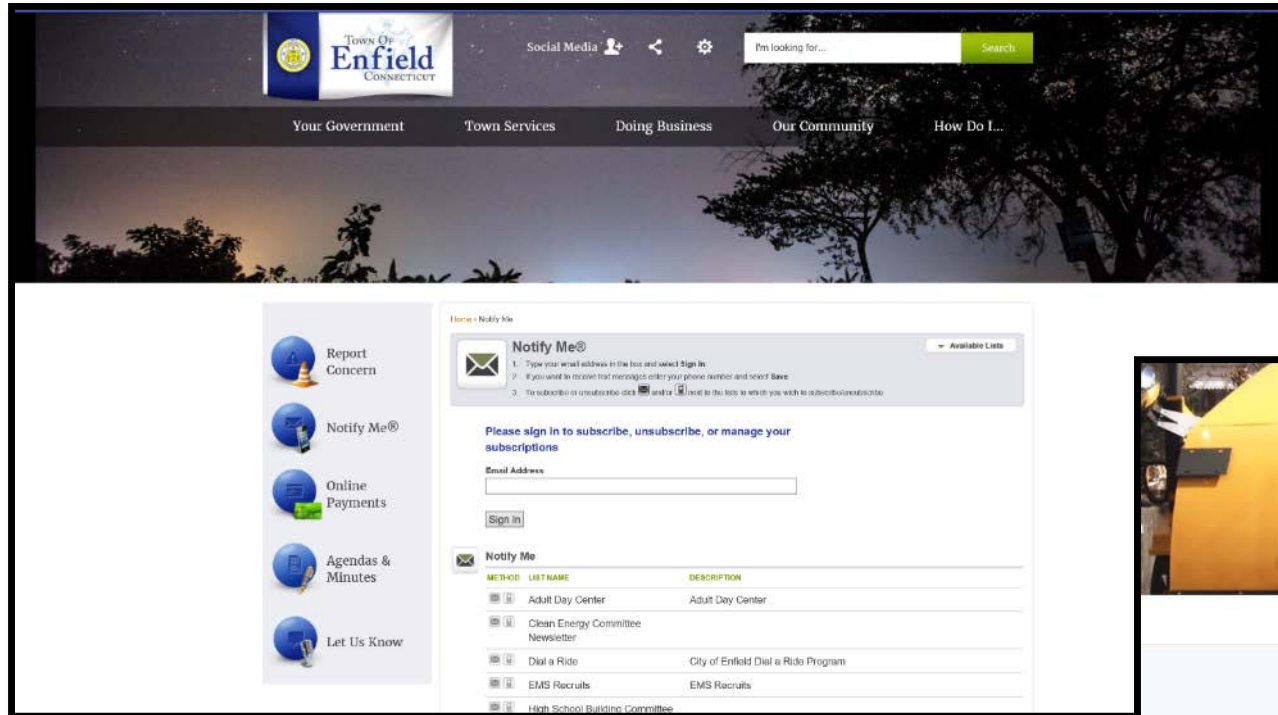


WOODARD
& CURRAN

Public Outreach: Choose the Right Platform

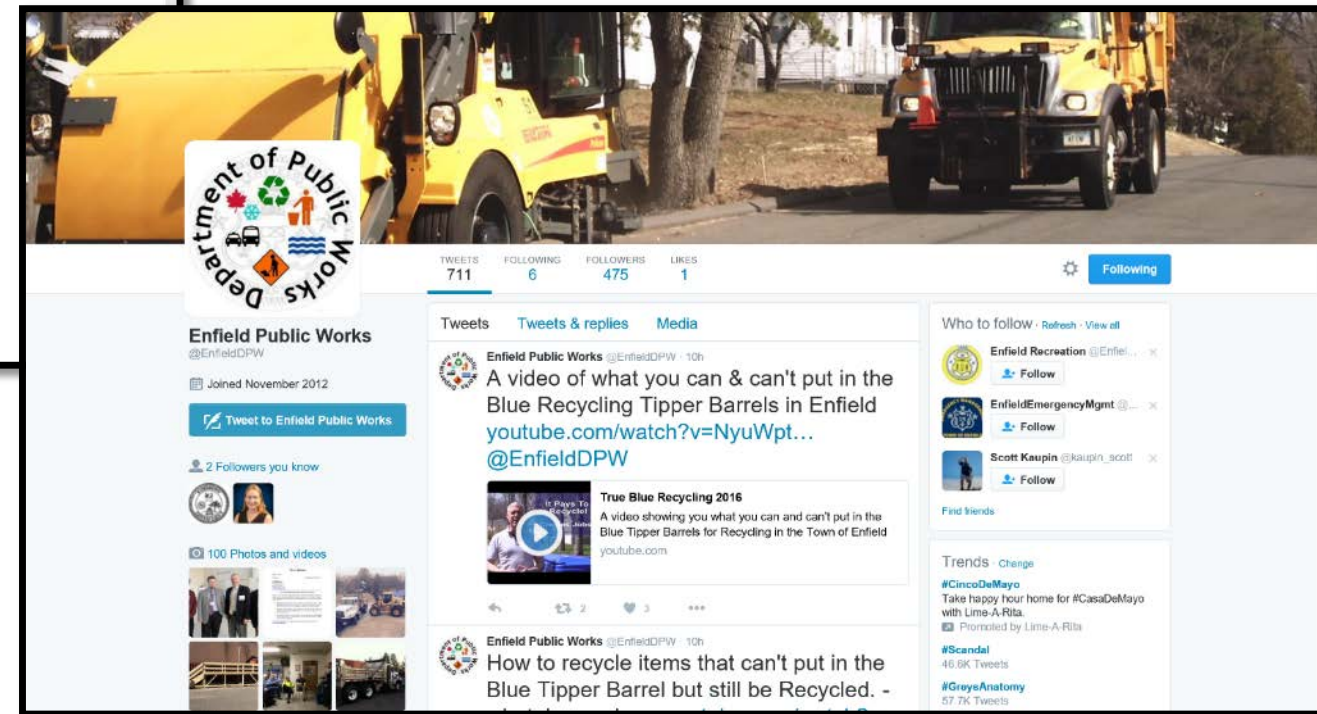


Public Outreach: Social Media as Effective Option



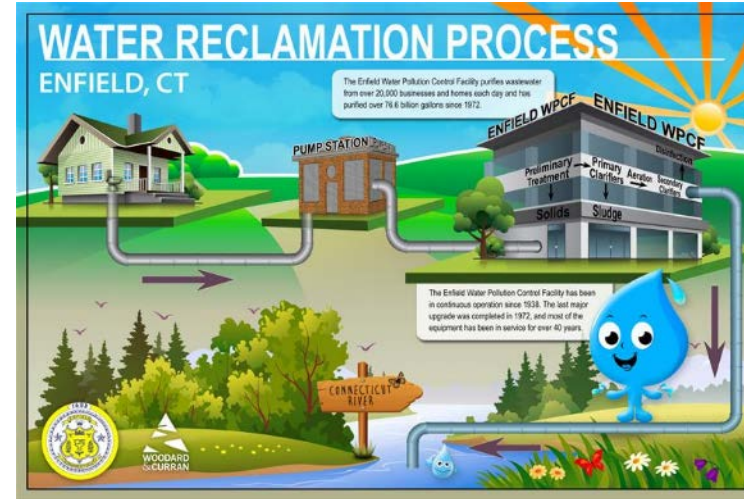
Enfield already had a Social Media strategy we could leverage...

Simple Social Media idea: take a photo of your meeting & post it...



Public Outreach: Other Effective Options

- Mailings
- TV
 - Slides on E-TV, plant tour, interview
- News print
- Face-to-Face
 - Senior Center, Farmer's Market, etc.
- Posters
 - Everywhere...even at Stop & Shop!
- Podcasts? – Yes, really!!!



WPCF Open House



\$36M in repairs and improvements needed for Enfield sewer system

Water Pollution Control Facility **Sewer System**

Plant constructed in 1938 Equipment needs replacement Some pipe & pump stations date back to the 1930's

Sewer fee generates funds for ALL anticipated capital improvements

No new taxes

\$1 in every \$5 is State Grant Funding

VOTE In November

WOODWARD & CURRAN

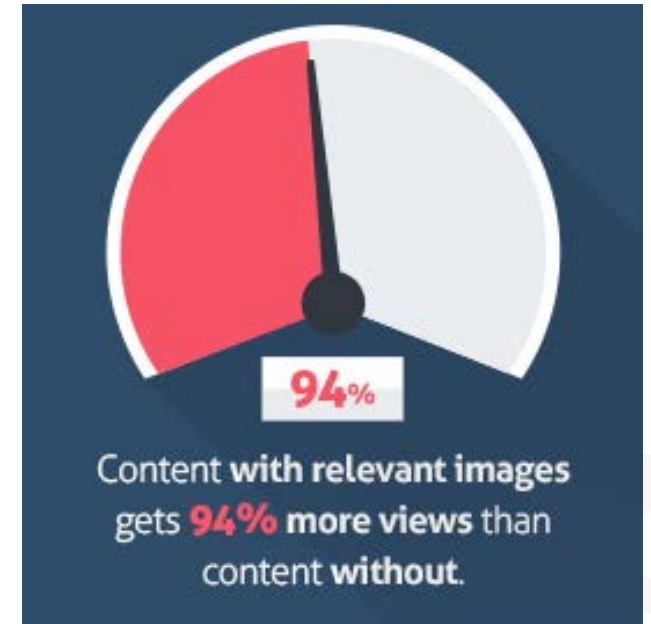
Public Outreach: What Do You Say?

- Share *positive* stories
- Show off your service
- Support your position with images & numbers
 - When people only *hear* information... they remember only 10%, 3 days later
 - If a relevant image is paired with that same information... 65% is retained 3 days later

Remember:

Good stories spread

Visual stories are remembered



Public Outreach: Be Prepared for a Conversation

Customers expect a response, especially when issuing a complaint

For example:

- 70% of Twitter users expect a response from organizations they reach out to
- 53% want a response in less than an hour
- That number jumps to 72% when they're issuing a complaint



Public Outreach: Enfield's Tailored Approach

Enfield implemented a diverse public outreach strategy, employing...

- Social media
- Website with general information & rate calculator
- Print media & mailings
- Television
- Public presentations
- Public event outreach



Why Do We Have a Sewer Fee?

Recently, the Town of Enfield looked for an equitable means to pay for necessary operations and improvements to its sewer system. The Town decided to implement a sewer fee. Previously, the Town funded its sewer program through a portion of the local property tax.

The Town recognized the need to spend significant money on sewer improvements in the near-term because of the age of its system and the need to comply with regulatory demands. By making a change to the current funding structure, residents and businesses are charged directly for sewer use. This provides a more stable system to finance short and long-term maintenance and improvement projects, brings the Town in line with funding structures used by a majority of communities in Connecticut and nationwide, and

offers a more fair method of paying for sewer improvements. Households that conserve water pay less than high-volume sewer users.

This change is more attractive to residents as well as the commercial and industrial community, and it provides the Town with additional external funding resources not available to municipalities that use property tax-based funding systems.

Changing the funding method will provide additional benefits. Rates can be locked in for three to five years to allow residents and businesses to plan accordingly. No property tax increase is needed to fund wastewater system improvements. Using this new funding system, a 10-year capital improvement plan can be implemented, providing a sustainable future for the Town of Enfield's wastewater needs. ■

Water Pollution Control

The origins of water pollution control in Enfield began in the 1930s when portions of the sewer collection system were installed. The Enfield Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) was originally constructed as a primary treatment facility in 1938. The next major sewer development occurred in 1967 with the codification of a Town ordinance (Chapter 86 of the Enfield Town Code) establishing a Water Pollution Control Authority in accordance with Chapter 103 of the Connecticut General statutes. A short time later in 1972, secondary treatment at the Enfield Water Pollution Control Facility was added to comply with the provisions of the Connecticut Clean Water Act of 1967 and subsequent Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972, which called for elimination of all polluted discharges to the nation's waters and mandated planning, regulation, and enforcement.

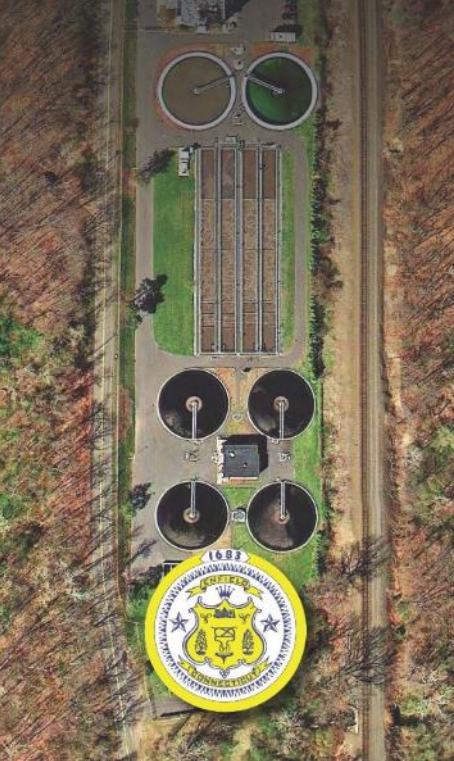


Today, sanitary wastewater is collected from residential, commercial and industrial users throughout the Town serving about 95% of the Town's approximately 45,000 residents as well as the Enfield and Somers Correctional Institutions. Enfield is responsible for maintaining the 10 million gallon per day WPCF, the sanitary sewer system comprising 250 miles of sewer pipe, and 16 pump stations.

On Tuesday, October 22, 2013 the Enfield town council unanimously voted to implement a new sewer usage fee starting January 2014 that will charge residents and businesses based on water consumption. The intent of this new sewer use fee is to independently fund current sewer facilities operations and a capital improvement plan. This is a very significant milestone for the Town which now has a sustainable path for funding their sewer program. ■

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Public Outreach: Enfield's Success!

Because of a strong public outreach campaign...

- Public was well informed
 - Customers understand the level of improvement & costs
- \$36 million sewer referendum passed
 - Energy Performance Contract failed
 - School Referendum defeated
- The foundation is now set for a self-sustaining sewer utility well into the future

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Water Pollution Control Facility

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1988 TOWN OF ENFIELD

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Questions?

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