

P.O. Box 2570
Ellicott City, MD 21041-2570
(443-570-2029)
info@mowpa.org



**Information Only for SB964 -
Dorchester County - Well and On-Site Sewage Disposal Activities - Privatization
Program**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee Members,

My name is Eddie Harrison, I am the legislative liaison representing MOWPA (Maryland Onsite Wastewater Professionals Association). MOWPA represents all Maryland professionals in the Onsite Industry. We have in our membership: Installers, Pumpers, Engineers, Property Transfer Inspectors, Operation and Maintenance Providers, and Code Officials.

I represent MOWPA as an un-compensated Legislative Liaison, current Vice-President, and former Board President.

My day job is the owner of BAT Onsite, LLC. BAT Onsite, LLC., is primarily an Operation and Maintenance Provider for automated Onsite Wastewater Systems. Including: Advanced Treatment Units (including BAT), Pump Systems, Mound Systems, Drip Dispersal Systems, and pretty much any Onsite Wastewater System that requires electrical/mechanical operation under 5,000 gallons per day. I am currently servicing over 800 units, covering the whole State of Maryland. I have been working in the Onsite Wastewater Industry as an installer, pumper, designer, property transfer inspector, and operation and maintenance provider since 1984.

Statement

MOWPA's membership has witnessed a progressive decline of services in most of the local Health Departments and the Onsite Division of the Maryland Department of the Environment over the past 20 plus years. Meanwhile, the complexity of Onsite Wastewater Systems has increased, and the number of failing system repairs has increased. Not forgetting new construction's ebbs and flows. These factors have significantly increased the workload for these departments, while the number of staff members has decreased. We believe that some of these offices are in a crisis mode and may collapse. Some Counties have already returned their MDE Delegation and others are contemplating to do the same.

Most local Health Departments are financially supported with State funds. A few Health Departments are self-funded (with no State dollars). Another few are State funded and then subsidized with additional county funds. The counties that fit the last two scenarios are not struggling with the staffing and overload issues to the level that is plaguing the smaller jurisdictions. This is due to larger employment packages in those Counties.

P.O. Box 2570
Ellicott City, MD 21041-2570
(443-570-2029)
info@mowpa.org



Back during the early 2000s, budget constraints started a trend of not replacing State/County staff that have left a position or seemed to be in no hurry to fill vacant positions. In some cases, we see smaller counties hiring staff, providing training and experience, only to see them migrate to larger counties, federal government, private industry, or other employment opportunities for more pay. This trend has increased over the years, to a point where we are in crisis. The current County and State staff work hard to do the best job they can. Some staff have left these departments from the frustration and workload.

An example: When I started working with one local Health Department in the 80s, the staff consisted of one Health Director, two Deputy Health Directors, four Area Sanitarians (inspecting new systems and repairs) and three “Subdivision” Sanitarians (dealing with new lot percolation tests and plan review for property development). Today in that same County they have one Health Director, one Deputy Health Director, two Area Sanitarians, and one Subdivision Sanitarian trying to accomplish the same duties with a larger workload.

Many of the seasoned staff in these departments have moved on. Many of the current staff are young and inexperienced. New hires are increasingly difficult to attract. It is not surprising that MDE may have to take over some of these local departments, but the fact is MDE doesn’t have the staff to provide the services that are needed either.

Our membership and industry leaders have regular discussions on this subject of SB964. Some members insist that “Privatization” is inevitable to resolve this dilemma. Where others are adamant that privatized invites conflict of interest. All of us agree that SOMETHING needs to be done before there is no one to perform these essential services. Whether that be for the State and Local Government to recruit and hire more help or contract these services out. But the private sector has the same labor shortage as the public sector. Today’s entry level workforce does not want to do manual labor. The young workforce wants to work from home on their laptop.

MOWPA hopes the legislature makes the correct, informed decision on SB964 and keeps this crisis in mind for any future legislation that could, potentially, improve the staffing shortage plaguing this industry.

Thank you for your time,

Eddie Harrison

9608B Fountain School Rd
Union Bridge, MD 21791
410-795-8691
rdsefe@aol.com