

Water agreement to benefit Montville, Ledyard, other towns in the long run

From A1
months.

Municipally owned, Groton Utilities has a water capacity far in excess of its needs. The utility designed its reservoir system to serve a large manufacturing base, including Pfizer Inc. When Pfizer phased out manufacturing in the city and focused on research and development, Groton Utilities was left with far more water than demand.

Montville, in contrast, has struggled for years with water problems.

"Of all the towns in the area, it is probably the most important for the Town of Montville," Mayor Joseph Jaskiewicz said of the agreement. Last month voters in that town approved appropriating \$4.5 million to fund its part in the construction project. Jaskiewicz said the increased water supply would encourage economic development along Route 32.

Officials from the City of Groton, Ledyard and Montville signed several agreements and permit applications at the morning ceremony. Water from the City of Groton will flow through pipes in Ledyard and across the river to Montville. In return for allowing water to pass through its system, Ledyard will get a water tank built on Avery Hill as part of the project, improving water volume for fire suppression and for homes in that area, said Clark.



Those in attendance repeatedly emphasized the significance of the event as a regional success in a state in which politics is often dominated by local self-interest.

"This is a celebration of what we can do when we work together," said Mohegan Tribal Chairman Mark Brown.

Popp embodies the regionalism. In addition to serving as mayor of the City of Groton, he is chairman of the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Council of Governments and a member of the Southeastern Connecticut Water Authority.

Two years ago local leaders were bickering over how to address regional water needs. The water authority was seeking to exert its authority, while the council of governments sought to take the regional initiative. Several speakers credited state Sen. Melodie Peters, D-Old Lyme, with bringing the factions together.

"We were really bogged down. She got us in a closed room and beat the crap out of all of us, that's the true story," said Preston First Selectman Robert Congdon. Congdon, a Republican, and a member of the water authority, also serves as state

representative from the 42nd District.

Both Congdon and Peters have decided not to run for reelection to the legislature.

"The most important thing about that meeting is that we came out with an agreement to do what we had to do to meet the (water) needs of the region," Peters said.

The regional system will allow water to be moved east or west, north or south. In the event any water system was contaminated by an accident or intentional attack, water could flow in from other systems in the region, Clark said.

While Montville, the Mohegan tribe and Ledyard will see the most immediate benefits, the improved regional water system will allow for future improved service to Waterford, East Lyme and Preston, he said.

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Highlights of the Water Project

■ Total cost: \$12 million. Mohegan tribe is providing \$9.8 million in upfront financing and expects to recoup roughly half that amount. Montville voters have committed \$4.5 million.

■ Work is scheduled to begin in Spring 2005 and take seven months to complete.

■ Construction plans include 20-inch-diameter water main under Thames River between Ledyard and Montville; water tanks on Avery Hill in Ledyard and Rogers Hill in Waterford; and a 16-inch-diameter water main under the Route 12 bridge connecting Preston and Ledyard.

■ Montville, now served by New London and Norwich utilities, will get water from Groton Utilities when project is completed.

■ Mohegan Sun, which uses on average 750,000 to 800,000 gallons of water daily, will get water from both Norwich and Groton utilities. It is currently served by Norwich.

■ Future construction could include an additional water main over the Mohegan-Pequot Bridge, and water service to Preston, Waterford and East Lyme.