OCTOBER 2026 UPDATE

The South Hero Wastewater Committee recently recommended that the town's planned wastewater system first serve new development on the Lavin parcel, rather than existing Route 2 homes and businesses. This update is intended to describe the reasons for this recommendation and what it means for the town.

The 96-acre Lavin parcel contains roughly 31 acres of developable land; the rest are wetlands. The current estimate of wastewater disposal capacity is about 10,000 gallons per day and the wastewater system cost is estimated about $5 million. These amounts will be refined as design progresses. The town has received over $1 million in grants from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for the property purchase and engineering studies. The town has been nominated for a $1 million Congressional earmark and plans to apply for another $1 million grant. Other funding must be obtained to completely fund the project. But the selectboard has indicated that it is opposed to the use of a bond that is funded by general property taxes.

The recommendation to prioritize service to the Lavin parcel is based on the following points:
1) Lavin parcel development creates revenues from the town's sale of lots and additional property taxes.
2) Serving new development costs significantly less than serving Route 2, where crews would have to work around existing utilities and drill under the highway. Unlike Lavin property development, demand for wastewater service along Route 2 is uncertain: more than half of respondents to a committee survey said their current systems are adequate. If too few property owners connect, user fees may not cover the system's costs.
3) New housing opens up another funding source, Vermont's Community and Housing Infrastructure Program (CHIP). CHIP lets a housing developer help pay for the infrastructure, with the loan repaid only from the new property taxes the housing generates. It does not take money away from schools, because the new property taxes only occur if there is development.
4) Property owners along Route 2 or elsewhere in the village could still connect at their own expense if the system has excess capacity, and additional small shared systems could serve the village later if suitable sites are found.

The Lavin Vision Steering Committee has been gathering residents' ideas for the parcel. This included a well-attended workshop on August 18 and another scheduled for November 18. There were many suggested uses, including recreation, trails, town forest, housing and commercial development. The wastewater system is a priority use for the property because the $1+ million in grants already received and spent are conditioned on the property's use for a wastewater system.

Once the Vision committee completes its work, the resulting vision will go to the Selectboard, which will use the information to create a development plan for the property. The selectboard also recently approved the creation of a Development Committee to assist the selectboard in this effort.