

# Hap Bowditch Jr.

**Chief Water Plant Operator, The Village of Dering Harbor NY**

3 South Midway Rd PO Box 730  
Shelter Island, NY 11964  
C 631-466-2075

5/10/18

The Mayor & Trustees of the Village of Dering Harbor  
PO Box 3010  
29 Locust Point Road  
Shelter Island Hgts, NY 11965

Re: Dering Harbor Water District, PWS ID# 5103700

Dear Mayor & Trustees,

I started as your Water Plant Operator on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Upon hire, 11 years ago I was asked my opinion of the existing water system in the Village of Dering Harbor. I recommended then adding a new Well and replacing the Tank.

According to the dates stamped on the Village Fire Hydrants your Water System was installed in 1933. The existing Water Tank was installed in 1956 and the water main connection to the Herd property subdivision was done in the 1980's. Other than that only connection points to residences have been updated. Anything else was authorized only to be updated on an *as needed basis*.

As I understand it Well # 1 was put in sometime in the 1960's, and it is possible some maintenance was done in the '80's. Over the years I have wanted this Well and the Well Pump updated for preventative maintenance. I could see things coming. I was repeatedly told – "Not as this time, our funds are limited." Since last year's leak repair, when the Well's check valve went bad and the necessary piping was replaced, we have located additional deterioration in the Well Casing. **This needs to be addressed now as it is affecting your water quality. You have a positive bacteria reading.** Money needs to be spent that can only be authorized by you. You own the system, this is your water. This is NOT the fault of the Water Plant Operator who tests your water - as recently stated in the Shelter Island Reporter.

When I first started in 2007, Well # 2's well and well pump were in bad condition. The Operator before me used Well #2 only 6 months, during the slowest time of the year (Jan-Jun,) in order to stretch its life. I continued to use it in the same manner, as again no money had been committed to make updates. In 2009, the Pump and the Well finally had to be taken out of use. At this point I again requested a new Well for the Village. I

suggested that it be located in the "Parks and Recreation" area across from the Village Hall. A survey was done then and a test well was dug that confirmed it as an optimal location. This proposed well would have been Well #3. This proposal was overruled at the time by the Village Board as it was considered too expensive. (The costs to register it and build a new pump house "to standards" were the reasons.) So the Village instead installed a new Well near Well #2 (side stepping these expenses, yet taking almost 4 years) which they now call Well # 2B. Well #2B is the only operating well right now. My testing shows an increasing use of water and with it increasing **chlorides which have now surpassed acceptable levels.**

On April 14<sup>th</sup> I was called into an Executive Session with the Village Board. At this time I was asked to predict the chloride levels for the upcoming season. No Operator can predict this. It depends on the recovery of the Well, the amount of homeowner use and/or potential mechanical failure on an aging system. I once again requested that the Trustee's go forward with a new Well, perhaps even a smaller well field. Only after reading last week's Reporter have I come to find out that Suffolk County Water Authority was invited to make a proposal to take over the Water System. Then on the 26<sup>th</sup> I was asked to help Suffolk County Water locate valves and test fire hydrants. Please know that through the years only 3 fire hydrants have been replaced and many still leak when opened. Maintaining and replacing Fire Hydrants is the responsibility of the Village of Dering Harbor. Allocating funds for replacing these was again only made when I stood on my head.

Consider how disheartening it was to find out last year that the approved new Tank, that I had requested 11 years prior, was up in the air. After 4 years of researching a grant to replace the Tank and then finally receiving one – someone had a better idea. After reinventing the wheel we have come to the same place. 32 patched holes this year and more than one year later it appears to be going ahead.

It has been absolutely impossible to be proactive as your Water Plant Operator. I have no control over the purse strings of the Village. To find out - only by reading the Reporter - that the Village was looking to replace the Village employee who was responsible for managing the system *since the 2017 drinking water debacle* - is insulting, publically humiliating and unprofessional at the very least. I have been trying to hold this system together for you with scotch tape. I am there 7 days a week and more if necessary. I do not get a day off unless I find and pay another Water Plant Operator out of my own wages. During last year's water crisis - which was due to mechanical failure - I put in hours and hours of overtime to diagnose and fix a problem that could have been anywhere in your 1933 Water System. In the end, even though NY Leak Detection Services was called in, they only verified my diagnosis of the leak source. Hours and hours were put in by me on behalf of the Village and I had to wait 4 months to be paid.

In the emails that I am cc'd on I get to hear the Trustee's praise each other -for hard work, thoughts and effort. There has been an awful lot of backslapping. But let me point out that we are quickly approaching our high season not much better off than last year. No one is making the hard decisions like - put in a new well. Remember no matter who

runs this system you own it. You have to pay for it. And Suffolk County Water Authority is not bringing you water from somewhere else. It is coming from right here in the Village. And I repeat you will pay for it.

No one seems to hear what I am saying and/or respect my requests on behalf of the Village Water System. I will not continue to be your scape goat. I am now notifying you of my retirement effective June 15th 2018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hap Bowditch Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "H" and a long, sweeping tail on the "Jr." part.

Hap Bowditch Jr.

Cc: John T. Colby, Mayor of the Village of Dering Harbor  
Dave Mullen, Suffolk County Health Department