

CARROLL COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
MINUTES OF UTILITIES ADVISORY COUNCIL
October 22, 2009
North Carroll Senior Center
2328 Hanover Pike
Greenmount, Maryland 21074
7 p.m.

Attendees: *Council*: Michael Wilmore, Dena Bauer, Leah Ann McCormick

Absent: Kathy Everly, Matt Candland

County Staff: Mike Evans, Frank Schaeffer, Tom Devilbiss, Jenny Hobbs, Penny Gist

Reports

Minutes/Master Plan: Mr. Evans distributed the Water and Sewer Master Plan Maps. The Master Plan booklet, with amendments, was previously mailed to the council along with the minutes of the September 24, 2009 meeting. He explained how to read the maps, noting that periodic revisions are made to the plan. Mr. Devilbiss stated the Water and Sewer Master Plan is amended in the spring and fall with an overall review as well.

Ms. Bauer asked about services possibly being extended outside of town limits. Mr. Evans noted that the Freedom area water capacity is good and that development is currently slow. Right now, Eldersburg is the only area that has unrestricted water use. Town policies dictate if they will be extending services outside the corporate limits.

Enterprise Fund Rates: Mr. Evans stated there are no changes since the last meeting in regards to the enterprise fund rates. Ms. Hobbs said rates should be “nailed down” in April, 2010. Mr. Schaeffer said they are reviewing the CIP and that the County has early returns on rates and the operating budget. Mr. Evans stated Public Works plan follows what Planning does; so we don’t know what effect that has on rates. He mentioned that there are budget shortfalls affecting the State, which in turn affects the Counties.

Pathways Plan: Mr. Evans announced that the Planning Commission decided yesterday not to continue with the Pathways Plan.

Old Business

Site Visit of County Facilities: Mr. Wilmore asked that tours of the Freedom Water Treatment Plant and Hampstead Wastewater Treatment Plant be scheduled. Mr. Schaeffer suggested Shiloh Pumping Station as well. The tours will be the morning of 11/19/09 with everyone meeting at 8:30 a.m. at the Wendy’s Restaurant parking lot at the Carrolltowne Mall, Eldersburg. The tour will act as November’s meeting.

Financial Disclosure Statement: Mr. Wilmore, Ms. McCormick and Ms. Bauer filled out statements for submittal to the Ethics Commission. Statements will be mailed to Mr. Candland and Ms. Everly.

Hampstead Effluent Temperature: Mr. Schaeffer distributed a HWWTP July 2008 Temperatures graph, Hampstead Wastewater Treatment Plant Monthly Effluent Temperature Monitoring Report, HWWTP Annual Temperature Non-Compliance Totals and the Discharge Permit dated 2/1/04 (effective 3/1/90, expiration 2/28/95). He noted that since the temperature limit was introduced on 2/1/04, information has been given to MDE every month there's non-compliance. Readings are taken every hour to determine the temperature; if it exceeds 20°, a statistical test is performed. He explained the Consent Order and that penalties are accrued, although the County has not paid them pending MDE's decision in regard to raising the temperature limit.

Mr. Wilmore asked why the limit was introduced. Mr. Devilbiss said it's due to the effect the effluent has on trout streams.

Ms. Bauer asked if there was funding for the cooling unit. Ms. Hobbs stated there is money set aside, which comes from area connection fees. Mr. Evans said either MDE assesses fines and enforces the installation of the cooling unit or they change the temperature limits in the permit, in which case the penalties will not be required to be paid.

Mr. Wilmore inquired if COMAR has any stipulations. Mr. Devilbiss said that the Clean Water Act, under federal law, states that temperature is one of the criteria.

Mr. Schaeffer distributed copies of and explained a letter dated 10/13/09 from James Slater, the County's Environmental Compliance Officer to Dave Lyons, MDE's Compliance Program regarding Consent Judgment Quarterly Progress Report for the period 7/1/09 through 9/30/09.

A cooling unit (\$2 million refrigeration system) has been designed that would cool the effluent before it enters the stream. Mr. Wilmore suggested a concrete holding tank to lower the temperature.

Ms. Bauer questioned if there is any chance of resolution. The next step is for MDE to publish a Notice of Intent to issue a permit. Then appeals may be filed by interested parties through MDE's appeal process.

New Business

Statement of Purpose and Goal Setting: Mr. Wilmore asked the council to think about this and then relay thoughts to him. Mr. Evans said the council's activities could be placed on the County's web site. Ms. McCormick mentioned that the statement of purpose and the goals could go there also.

The County's Needs: Mr. Wilmore introduced this for discussion. Mr. Evans said the council and the County are going through a learning process together as the group evolves. The scheduled tours will help the council to better understand operations. Emergency situations are taken care of regardless of budget cuts. Mr. Wilmore asked about new projects. Mr. Evans noted that system growth comes from development; development pays for most of it. Current projects involve systems already in place: reconstruction of pumping stations, replacement of pipes, looping of water lines for better flow, etc.

Citizen Concerns: Mr. Wilmore introduced this for discussion. Mr. Evans stated the South Carroll Business Association has expressed concerns about the way the rates are structured. Low users are rewarded for conservation and high users pay higher rate. Mr. Schaeffer explained fixed charge and usage rate. Mr. Wilmore asked about meters. Mr. Evans said the size of the meter, whether 5/8 or 3/4", represents one user unit vs. a larger meter serving more than one unit (equivalent dwelling units). At one point, it was determined that the rates should be more uniform. Businesses were concerned about paying for a larger share than what they were actually receiving. Another concern was that "I'm conserving water and you're charging me the same." Mr. Wilmore said the citizens need to be presented with the rate information and be able to understand it. Mr. Schaeffer noted that the rates get compared to other towns. The County plans for the cost of maintenance. Mr. Evans said the rate model is to de-politicize what the rate should be.

Discussion ensued about kitchen grease. Mr. Wilmore said most people put it in the trash or pour it down the drain. Mr. Schaeffer stated that it can be taken to the Northern Landfill for recycling. Mr. Evans said that septic tanks and public sewer systems are not good places to deposit grease. Ms. McCormick asked if there was an incentive for restaurants not to put grease into the system. Mr. Schaeffer said restaurants are required to have grease traps.

Mr. Wilmore noted that he's heard the concern of "What can I do to reduce usage?" Mr. Evans noted that the Bureau of Utilities has water conservation devices for sale and that water conservation could be promoted via the usage bills. Mr. Wilmore said it does need to be advertised and that the County's web page could be used. Mr. Evans noted that by code, recently built homes have water efficiency built in. Ms. Hobbs stated that the effect of water conservation by users is starting to be seen (referring to calendar year 2008).

Questions for the Department of Public Works: Mr. Wilmore introduced this for discussion. He asked if the recent rates are being reduced. Ms. Hobbs stated the third tier gets the benefit of the reduction, which is miscellaneous revenue; a large part of this is interest. Everyone that hits 10,000 gallons gets the benefit of the rates. She suggested going over the rate models at another meeting. Mr. Schaeffer noted that miscellaneous revenue will be going away over the next five years. A discussion of the rate model will probably be the topic of the December or January meeting.

Mr. Wilmore asked about sewer overflows. Mr. Schaeffer stated small scale overflows occur (3 to 4 hour cleanups). By-pass occurs when the effluent doesn't go through the full treatment process. Sometimes there are clogs in the manholes and pipes break. There have been one or two pumping station overflows when the pumps didn't work. The County's systems are reasonably young and are maintained to try to prevent overflows.

Mr. Wilmore mentioned Bay restoration fees. Mr. Schaeffer noted that these fees are divided among 67 wastewater treatment plants in the state. The money is used to improve the level of treatment and the quality of the effluent. Not enough money is being collected to pay for the improvement of all the treatment plants.

Mr. Wilmore asked for the number of customers and a breakdown. Ms. Hobbs will provide that.

Mr. Wilmore asked about stimulus money. Mr. Evans noted that Union Bridge and Westminster are getting some funds. We put in \$20 million for projects, but got nothing. Mr. Schaeffer noted that the ENR upgrade of the treatment plant is being designed but not built at this time. Mr. Evans confirmed there is no stimulus money for this.

Mr. Wilmore asked about the life span of the pipes. Mr. Schaeffer said 50 to 75 years. Mr. Evans noted that the system is well-maintained.

Ms. McCormick asked about sewage backups. Mr. Evans noted that backups are frequently caused by users putting items in the system that don't belong there; i.e., diapers, kitchen grease, etc. These are also caused by roots. This lends to pipes clogging.

Mr. Wilmore asked about the amount of sewer and water being treated. Mr. Schaeffer stated that treating sewage flow is expensive and that when rain and groundwater infiltrates the system it gets treated as well. This increases treatment cost and takes up system capacity. Mr. Evans stated that effluent is measured by engineering guidelines of what to expect from a tight system. Mr. Schaeffer stated that dry and wet weather affects flows. He went on to explain the I&I Study (infiltration and inflow) being performed in Hampstead. Meters measured flow continuously for about 5 months. The County is in the process of completing this and will identify needed repairs.

Mr. Wilmore asked about school system funding. Mr. Evans stated the County gives the school money to operate the schools and bills them for water and sewer usage and garbage collection.

Mr. Wilmore stated that it looks like capacity is sufficient for a long time. Mr. Evans said it depends on the rate of growth. Small systems have been designed in the past for relief. The major systems are in Hampstead and Freedom.

Mr. Wilmore asked about UV light vs. chlorination. Mr. Schaeffer said all the sewer systems use UV light.

Mr. Evans asked the council to think about if they want to hold meetings at one specific spot or continue with the schedule as is. Ms. Bauer asked about the cancellation policy. If schools are closed or close early, the meeting is cancelled.

Council appointments for Ms. McCormick and Mr. Candland expire on 12/31/09. Ms. McCormick stated she would like to be considered for reappointment. A message has been left for Mr. Candland regarding his reappointment.

The meeting was adjourned.

Remaining schedule: (note that November/December meetings are held on the 3rd Thursdays of the month)

11/19/09 *Hampstead Wastewater Treatment Plant, Shiloh Pumping Station and Freedom District Water Treatment Plant Tours, meet at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot at Wendy's Restaurant in the Carrolltowne Mall, Eldersburg*

12/17/09 *Westminster Sr. Center*

1/28/10 *North Carroll Sr. Center*

2/25/10 *South Carroll Sr. Center*

3/25/10 *WSC*

4/22/10 *NCSC*

5/27/10 *SCSC*

6/24/10 *WSC*

7/22/10 *NCSC*

8/26/10 *SCSC*

9/23/10 *WSC*

10/28/10 *NCSC*

11/18/10 *SCSC*

12/16/10 *WSC*

c: *Council Members*
J. Michael Evans, Director, Department of Public Works
Franklin G. Schaeffer, Deputy Director, Department of Public Works
Joe Barrington, Chief, Bureau of Solid Waste
Sheree Lima, Financial Manager, Department of Public Works
Robert Burk, Comptroller
Robin Hooper, Budget Analyst, Department of Management & Budget
Jenny Hobbs, Financial Analyst, Department of the Comptroller
Steve Powell, Chief of Staff, Board of County Commissioners
Utilities Advisory Council File
Chron File

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