

September 14, 2015

The Strasburg Township Board of Supervisors held a special meeting on Monday, September 14, 2015, at 7:00 p.m. at the Refton Community Fire Company, 99 Church Street, Refton. Present were Supervisors Peggy Dearolf, Michael Weaver and Thomas Willig; Administrator Mark Deimler; Solicitor Jason Hess; HRG Consultant Adrienne Vicari.

Guests: Landis & Julie Hersh, Dale Winters, Randy & Kim Harnish, Adolph Frey, Darlene Greist, Solomon & Kim Yoder, Daniel Landis, Mike & Anna Kuhns, John Z. King, John Harnish, Melissa & Kevin Kelly, William Mellinger, Gladys Bert, F. John Pugliese, Curtis Wiggins, Karl & Dianne Cox, Chris & Chris Peterson, Timothy & Robin Wilson, Shawn Bortzfield, Lloyd & Lois Mellinger, Shirley Shank, John Eichelberger, Jr., Allen & Fran Gruver, Richard Leo, Christ B. & Marion Riehl, Jacob Thompson, Ronald Rinier, Kameron & Deirdre Dunn, Betty Paes, Ronald Brackbill, Evan & Tiffany Raeburn, Jim Cole, Geraldine Reed, Harry Wade, Cathy Welk, Joseph Steckler, Jr., Duane Mark, Ray Peters, Richard Lefever, Alan Eshleman.

Willig introduced the panel: Deimler, Hess and Vicari

Deimler commented the project was bid in three parts – the conveyance system, waste water treatment plant (WWTP) and electrical system. The WWTP portion was rebid to seek a lower quote. A modest savings was achieved. The closing for the funding is scheduled for November 11th. In early November, the contractor will contact each property owner for final grinder pump placement. Deimler recommended each property owner have a preliminary discussion with the owner's plumber of choice to get the best placement at the lowest cost. It will take approximately nine (9) months to complete the project.

Vicari gave an overview of the actual construction process and provided handouts showing the appearance of the mechanics. There will be a one-time connection fee of \$3500.00 due approximately August 2016. Each property owner will be responsible for the electrical connection, decommissioning their existing on-lot disposal system (OLDS), and physical connection to the conveyance system. There will be a monthly user fee of \$119.00 per equivalent disposal unit (EDU) and an estimated \$1.00-2.00 per month increase in the owner's electric bill. There is funding assistance for the connection fee, cost of connecting to the conveyance system and decommissioning their OLDS in the form of a 20 year loan at 1.75% through PennVEST. There is no assistance with the monthly user fee. Approximately 60-90 days before the need to connect to the system, there will be another public meeting with representatives from PennVEST present to explain the program.

Vicari stressed the monthly fee is based on residents paying their fees in a timely manner. If the delinquency rate is too high, that fee will be increased to cover the difference.

Willig asked if pump failures were built into the construction plan and price. Vicari responded there will be additional pumps and cores available as replacements as part of the project. Deimler noted approximately \$100,000.00 of the monies collected as connection fees will go into a maintenance fund for the system. The remainder of those monies will be put toward the principal of the loan from PennVest. Willig commented to keep the maintenance cost down owners must use their grinder pumps as instructed to reduce damage.

Hess commented all agreements have been signed and recorded. He thanked the residents for their cooperation.

A question and answer session was held:

John Harnish - Do the pumps would have a shutoff in case of clog? There is a shutoff and an alarm on the exterior of the house to alert the Township there is a problem. There is also a check valve in the pump to prevent backup.

Kameron Dunn - Does the owner pay for a damaged pump? If the damage was caused by misuse, yes.

Ron Rinier - What is the expected repair response for a failure? The Township will have a contract with a service agency to be on call 24/7, but there is a reserve capacity of approximately 50 gallons in the system.

Alan Eshleman - How long will the monthly user fee be in place? The loan is for 30 years and there will be continuing maintenance and operation costs. A fee will be in place for the foreseeable future.

Betty Paes - Why is the final cost so much higher than first projected and the number of connections lower? The WWTP came in 50% over the estimate. There are 81 connections and 91 EDU's. Some properties were removed from the original list due to planning and cost considerations.

Ron Rinier - How was this project considered affordable to the property owners? DEP did not consider the monthly fees to be excessive and were pushing for this project to move forward.

Evan Raeburn - Will there be an inspection fee for the hookup? Those costs are built into the connection fee.

Daniel Landis - Is water quality guaranteed to improve? There can be no guarantee, but it can only improve.

Allen and Fran Gruver - Will there be accountability for the allocation and use of the monies received? There will be a separate budget which will be subject to annual audit and all information will be available for review as a matter of public record.

Betty Paes - Can additional properties from nearby communities be added to reduce the overall cost? The Board is committed to farmland preservation and do not want to encourage development. Other nearby dwellings were deemed ineligible as the cost to connect them outweighed the benefit.

Allen Gruver - Will the fees be billed quarterly? That is the plan as of now.

Darlene Griest - Will there be a list of contractors from which to choose? Each property owner may use whomever they wish.

John Eichelberger - What will be the penalty for delinquent accounts? The Township can authorize the solicitor to institute an enforcement action with potential of a lien being placed on the property. A 10% delinquency rate is built into the \$119.00 user fee. A higher delinquency rate will result in a higher user fee in the future.

Jacob Thompson - What is the lifespan of the grinder pumps and why is the projected maintenance reserve \$100,000.00? There is no reserve fund money built into the \$119.00 monthly fee. The system and pumps will have a warranty. If it appears the reserve is more than needed after several years and the system is financially sound, the Township may elect to lower the user rate. The Township insurance policy will cover any true catastrophe.

Weaver stated the project was mandated by the State and the Township had no recourse. It has not been well received by anyone, including him, and there is a lot of compassion for the residents of Refton. The Township held off as long as possible in order to protect the citizens, but there is no more tolerance from DEP. DEP is also looking at another area of the Township for the same reasons.

Willig stated he did fight the project asking how the Township and the affected residents could afford it. DEP replied affordability was not their concern.

Vicari stated the determination was arrived at by the results of the OLDS and well water test surveys. A failure rate of 25% requires construction of a physical treatment plant. Refton's rates were over 50%.

Public comment was invited for items not on the agenda. There was none.

There being no further business before the Board, the Supervisors adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Judith G. Willig
Township Secretary