

SPECIAL COUNCIL WORKSHOP

August 25th, 2018 9:00 am

Mayor Clark called the meeting to order at 9 am.

ROLL CALL: Paula Tubalkain, Marty Hura, Ben Prescott, and Dave Sluka.

Mayor Clark noted that Scott and Bob may have thought the meeting started at 9:30 since that is what Jenny put on the agenda. If they are not here by the end of the meeting, she will ask for a motion to excuse them.

OTHERS PRESENT: Mayor Linda Clark, Village Administrator John Trew, Village Engineer Rich Iafelice and Brian Rogers from C.T. Consultants, Administrative Assistant Marty Fergus.

CITIZENS: Gene Roberts and Tia Rutledge from Portage County Water Resources, Chelsea Gregor, Chief Urso, Tom Aldrich, Dave Green, Giles Seith, and Ellie Stamm.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION:

Management of Assets- Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants

Mayor Clark introduced Gene Roberts, Director of Portage County Water Resources and then turned the meeting over to him. They have a lot of information and data to share with the village that they have been collecting. This might help Council make a decision on the direction they take with the water and wastewater treatment plants. The decision will involve the County Commissioners as well.

Gene introduced Tia Rutledge, also from PCWR. She distributed a report booklet to Council that evaluated the village's current situation and projections. With the information collected, she was able to come up with a capital improvement plan. The booklet includes the current inventory at both plants, and the financial outlook of both plants. Ohio EPA issues are summarized in this booklet, along with projections of which direction the EPA is expected to go in the future.

The cap of the reservoir and the water distribution system plans are due by October of this year. The water treatment plant (WTP) is clear from the flood plain, but the wastewater plant (WWTP) has potential flooding concerns. The WWTP is elevated, but the treatment areas are going to be an issue if there was a major flood.

Next, the operations and maintenance program is addressed. The village currently has the appropriate authority to operate both plants. There was no dedicated staffing, which could be a concern. There were several employees that did parts of the daily work load. Safety and training programs need to be in place.

Population projection appears that we are at 15% capacity for water and 41% capacity for wastewater. According to the AMATS population data, there is not much growth expected in the village, but outlying areas will grow, which could possibly increase our capacity.

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Equipment assets were summarized as far as pump stations, wet wells, and any potential items that could be replaced, and they are included in the plan. Maintenance records are missing, so they used the date of install and came up with replacement estimates based on the condition of these assets. They obtained information from the operators at the time, interviewed the EPA, and the county operators for recommendations. Assets were classified by need. Classifications include immediate needs (broken or high risk items that should be on hand), short term needs, and operational improvement needs. They have also provided estimated costs. All of this is in the booklet. Tia also addressed equipment replacement costs. She projected an average of 3% annual cost increases.

Regarding the infrastructure and hydrants, most of these are the original waterlines from 1908. The EPA regulations state that a hydrant must be on at least a 6" line to have enough pressure to put out a fire.

Gene said this is an industry wide problem, not just Mantua. Due to problems arising with drinking water (such as Toledo algae problem), the EPA is now mandating asset management plans. The average waterlines should last 50 years. Our pipes are 100+ years old. The other piece that needs looked at is water loss.

The Auditor of State keeps an eye on all of this as well. Proprietary funds are carefully scrutinized. The information in these audits are what the county used to project the future. Rates are based on volume of water, but over time, usage has decreased because people are being more careful. Gene reviewed our financial history in the village's proprietary funds. Our costs seemed to trend upward about 3% per year. Operating and supplies, personnel, and contractual services also trended up. A lot of debt was paid off and should be all paid off by 2024. Finally, the most important part of the audit is the fund balance. This tells us what is available for emergencies. We should have one year of expenses on reserve at all times. Financial projections were done by village staff. Overall, we are looking good. The sewer charges are more because it costs much more to treat that drinking water. Gene is concerned that no money is building for capital expenses. It is a risk.

One last part of the report is the rate comparison. Mantua did a good thing with the rate stabilization (increase schedule). A small amount every year means nobody gets upset. The dry periods with no increase must be caught up eventually and sometimes that can hurt.

Giles Seith asked how much water the county buys from other areas. Gene said hundreds of thousands of gallons. Well water cannot be mixed with surface water. If the county gets water from somewhere, it becomes a public water system that must be tested. Giles asked how many good wells produce in Shalersville. Gene said there are 4 wells in Shalersville that are producing. Giles said acquiring Mantua's wells would be a huge win to the county, but a so-so deal for Mantua. Giles asked how hard it would be to run a pipe from Mantua wells. Gene said the Village Engineer has already drawn up a rough plan and it would go right under the turnpike.

Ellie asked if the capital improvement expenses would still be a village expense. Gene said the village customers would be paying for this.

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Dave Green said in the past, the county has taken over different plants in the county. Gene said the county has never taken ownership of any plants, but has operated some. Dave asked if the county has ever presented a proposal to Mantua Village for operation of their systems. Gene said that the county is currently operating the village plants until the end of the year. Dave asked what would be the advantage to Mantua to turn over the plants to the county? Mantua will save money in operating costs. The county can do things much cheaper than the village can. The county has more resources and tools. The disadvantage is that the Council loses control of rates that their residents are charged. If the County keeps operating the village plants, they will have to hire people. The benefit is that the county would pick up 500 more customers.

Mayor Clark said a lot of us think that the plants are an asset. They are not self-sufficient and have become a liability because of occasions that the General Fund has to help pay debt or operations at the plant. Dave Green asked Mayor Clark who is the village's biggest customer. She said Stamm Contracting, Crestwood Schools, and Compass Packaging. Dave said if the county took over, would the schools' water bills decrease? Mayor Clark said the county would keep our 15% increase schedule until we level out with the county until they catch up all of our repairs and replacements.

Rich Iafelice said he did a study a few years ago and advised that the Village needed labor to operate the plants. The village did not even have a fulltime staff person to operate the plants. The 15% increase still doesn't give them the ability to hire full time staff for the plants. Mayor Clark said we now have a Village Administrator who has a lot of knowledge and expertise with the plants. We are also in a "Mutual Aid" program with other entities in the county. The village doesn't have a lot of equipment to contribute, but we have sent man power out to the townships in the past.

Mayor Clark read a letter from a resident who had concerns of the estimated bills that the village sent them. She thinks their bills are high and wondered if turning over the water and sewer billing to the county might help. Mayor Clark said the village needs to address the cost of hiring full time people at the plants that can do the maintenance if we want to keep the plants.

Tom Aldrich asked if the village has the potential of increasing sales and our customer base to help our situation. Gene said the village has a small percentage of buildup. As far as industry, these new companies are recycling water.

Gene said the WTP is in pretty good shape. He would recommend a little softening to the water. The WWTP is the one that they think is going to need a lot of attention. They are trying to streamline the processes as much as possible.

Chelsea Gregor started to explain the letter that Mayor Clark read. Mayor Clark stopped her and said they would discuss it further at the Service meeting. Then Chelsea asked if the county took over, would they replace all of the meters in the village. Gene said the meter base is the same, but the meter head with a radio unit would be replaced. All meters could be read in 30 minutes as opposed to two days doing only actual reads of half the village.

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There is tremendous savings in doing this. Chelsea asked if the county were to take over, what would happen with the employees. Paula Tubalkain said that is why she wanted to start having these workshops. These are all things we have to figure out. As Council people, we have real issues to address that have been let go for twenty years. Even though Rich has been looking things over, Paula is reassured that another group is looking carefully at what is going on here. Dave Sluka said regarding the village employees, they don't know those answers. There might be potential of them becoming county employees. Gene said most of the clerical stuff is computer generated, so the transition period is where they would need the village employees and the knowledge they possess. The county would need additional help. Ultimately, it would be up to the county Commissioners.

Another thing that has not been discussed, is that the plants will eventually need replaced. Do they build in the same place, farther apart, somewhere else? There are stricter regulations with the EPA now. Paula said that is something that could really affect us.

Gene said they are happy to come back for more work sessions whenever Council would like. Gene said there is a shortage of operators, and they have considered proposing to Maplewood to offer a class for operators. They would still have to work with a licensed operator for some time. Not having an operator of record could add up to large daily penalties.

Tia passed out a questionnaire to Council, looking for opinions. Gene asked if they could fill it out before they leave and they would respond back. It could be anonymous. Council completed their questionnaires and returned them to Gene. Gene thanked Council.

The meeting adjourned at 10:47 am.

Mayor Linda Clark

Jenny August, Clerk-Treasurer