

**SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
MINUTES
September 29th, 2020, 6:00 PM
Buchert Park Pavilion**

Mayor Clark called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

ROLL CALL: Ben Prescott, Paula Tubalkain, Matt Rosolowski, Tammy Meyer, Marty Hura, and Scott Weaver.

Other Village Personnel: Mayor Linda Clark, Clerk- Treasurer, Jenny August; Village Solicitor, Michele Stuck, Village Administrator John Trew, Police Chief Joe Urso, Village Engineer Rich Iafelice from CT Consultants.

Citizens Present: Gene Roberts and Tia McKee from Portage County Water Resources, Ted Bixler, Jon Harmon, Cookie Vanek, Mike Zamecnic, Rod and Lois Summerlin, Lynnrae Derthick, Cindy Toth, Linda Zoller, Ursula Ficht, Kirk and Anita Ressler, Bob and Sue Gaglione, Tom Knipper, Diane Smith from the Record Courier, Roger Hawkins, Roger and Diane Brinker, John Clark, Sandy Engelhart, Karen Stutzman, Sarah Pilgrim, Tom Aldrich, Anna Lee Heinl, Sheila Majors, Don Buchert, Marty Fergus, and many others.

Discussion Topics:

CONSIDERING RENEWAL OPTIONS FOR GUARDIAN INSURANCE:

This is the employee dental, vision, and life insurance. Guardian has offered the village two Covid-Relief renewal options to consider; the first would be one month free which is a value of \$761. The second option is to lock in our current rate of \$761 per month for two years. Our insurance typically increases 5% annually, this option would save the village \$1,392.

❖ Motion to select option 2 by Ben Prescott, seconded by Matt Rosolowski. All ayes on vote.

RESOLUTION 2020-45

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE PORTAGE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS RELATING TO PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO ORDINANCE 2019-49, THE “MANTUA VILLAGE, COUNTY OF PORTAGE WATER AND SANITARY SEWER SYSTEMS TRANSFER AGREEMENT”, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. This is the 2nd Reading.

Mayor Clark said this meeting is to discuss the proposed amendments to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the transfer agreement. This meeting is not to tell people how to vote in the November election. She asked Rich Iafelice to explain the changes being outlined in this resolution.

Rich said this Resolution is addressing major changes to terms that were adopted last year relating to billing. The surcharge has been changed from a flat rate to a new method using the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Equivalent Building Units (EBU’s) standards. He asked Gene Roberts from Portage County Water Resources to explain.

Gene Roberts said the EPA “Green book” lists various types of EBU’s based on the flow calculated by sanitary sewers. A single residential home would be averaged at 400 gallons per day. The number changes with schools, various types of businesses, number of seats, etc. There are distribution factors that lower the cost to families from a base rate of around \$89 in the current MOU to the proposed \$59 per month. This reduces the cost to residences but will increase the cost to commercial accounts. The more grant money we receive, the bigger the reduction. Every million dollars of grant money will reduce the surcharge by \$7.00. Gene feels certain that there will be grant money available.

Sheila Majors asked what will happen if the ballot issue does not pass. John Trew said our bills will double or triple, and we could not get the grants that the county can. Lois Summerlin said our bills have already doubled in the past few months. Rich Iafelice said if the ballot issue fails, the village will have some decisions to make. Lois asked if anything has been done towards improvements with the extra money they have paid in the last few months. Rich said no, and added that 92% of our customers are residential. The current rate structure goes by use. The county’s proposal goes from a minimum bill range of \$125 to \$340. The \$125 is a flat rate of \$65 and a surcharge of \$60 per month. The surcharge is based on over 10 million dollars in the identified needs list.

Gene Roberts said the county has several thousand customers. The average residential use is about 168 cubic feet per day. The county projects that rates will go down. Gene added that the county has more workers, labs, etc. to operate the plants than the village does.

Ben Prescott asked Gene to explain recapitalization. Gene said it is basically the cost of putting everything back to EPA standards.

Ted Bixler said the plants are in bad shape. Most of the plants are beyond their normal life. We can’t change the past and how things were handled, but we can change the direction we are going. Grants are available but we can’t guarantee the matching funds. Full time project management; we don’t have that. We can’t afford materials and consumables. We can’t provide proper management, but the county can.

Rich Iafelice said three areas of the MOU were significantly revised;

- 1) the base rate/surcharge.
- 2). The emergency interconnect between the village and the county. This is recommended by the EPA to have backup. In the original MOU, we were going to equally share the cost. In the proposed MOU the county will pay 75%, as well as apply for up to 90% potential grant funding.
- 3). Relating to new customers that tie in inside the boundaries of the village system, the village cannot assess for tie in fee’s. The county will apply the tie in fees towards the surcharge reduction. Any new customers will also pay the same surcharge as village customers are paying. This includes homes or businesses that are added if they are serviced by the village facilities.

Ben Prescott asked if the identified needs list will continue to increase. Gene Roberts said the village is responsible for what is on the current needs list, but if the ballot issue passes, anything after January 1, 2021 will be the responsibility of the county.

Paula Tubalkain said that throughout the MOU, we reference the “needs list”. There is only one section in 6.3 that references I and J. The county website needs list does not reflect the adjusted cost regarding the emergency interconnect. Gene said the reason is because the agreement was voted on. These are proposed changes. Paula said it seems like it should be identified as a 25%

local share. The figures are based on the old needs list. Paula said she hears it but doesn't see it in writing. Ted thinks the pages will be modified if this passes.

Rod Summerlin asked what the emergency interconnect is. Gene explained that it is a backup to the water system. This would be a good idea in the event of a major fire. Ted Bixler said the \$32,000 anticipated cost is worth it. Paula said if the new tap in customer is primarily serviced by the village, this goes towards our recapitalization. These people will be paying the surcharge, so she thinks this should be adjusted annually. Gene said Portage County Water Resources will report annually to the village and make the adjustments as well as the balance of debt and the needs list.

Ben Prescott asked if the minimum charge will be for 400 cubic feet per customer. Gene said "Yes, that is probably where we are going to be at. In that neighborhood." Ben said according to our records, there are 200 people in this village that don't even use 200 cubic feet per month.

Tracy Bristentine asked if the meter upgrade is being done on all water meters and will the cost be charged to us. Mayor Clark said it is on the needs list. The cost is \$200,000 and we have taken out a loan for that, so it will be coming off the needs list.

Ursula Ficht asked why we are changing the meters. Mayor Clark said we want the capability of auto-reads. Nobody will have to come to your house to read the meter.

Rod Summerlin asked if the ballot issue passes, what time frame are we looking at to have everything fixed? Gene Roberts said they hope to have everything on the needs list done in 5 years. Rod asked if there will always be a surcharge. Gene said once the debt has been erased and the needs list is completed, the surcharge will go away. Gene said the county has skilled mechanics that will do a lot of this work to keep costs down whenever possible. They are hoping to get at least half of the work done with grant funds. The only time after that would be if the village wanted to do something, such as putting automatic sprinklers in to water flowers or something like that.

Sandy Engelhart asked if Mantua Township will still have to pay extra. Mayor Clark said the township customers 25% increase will go away and township customers will pay the same rates as the village. Sandy said hydrants need to be flushed. Her water is terrible.

Lois Summerlin asked if the two churches in town will pay the same rate as the residents. Gene said no, the rate for churches is based on factors such as the number of seats, if they have a daycare, if they have a kitchen etc. Rich said it may be based on possible maximum discharge. It is determined case by case.

Rod Summerlin said we missed an opportunity years ago, because when Council built these plants they planned for expansion. There is now a lot of untapped potential. He thinks that the land by the turnpike will never sell without service. Rod asked if the county will look into getting funding to providing service to that area to entice development. Gene said there are two pieces to the response. First, the Clean Water Act from the 1970's related to facilities planning, and money flowed for that purpose which may be why the old Council over built. Second, you are saying if we build it they will come. Is that what the zoning and the locals who live there want? If so, there is economic development money available to assist with development there. The 90% grant for the emergency interconnect is through the EPA.

Mayor Clark wanted to clarify the ballot language. Voting yes would mean the county would take ownership of the plants. Voting no means, the village keeps the plants. Michele Stuck said voting yes approves the transfer agreement.

Mike Zamecnik asked if a yes vote means people pay less? Rich said yes, the surcharge goes down from \$86.79 to \$60, and residential customers pay less, but commercial customers do not.

Caren Stutzman asked if rental properties are considered residential or commercial. Gene said they are residential.

Lois Summerlin said the two churches use a very small amount of water. They are struggling already. Paula said some churches have seating capacity for 200 people but may only have 50 members. Tia McKee said it is based on seating capacity. Paula said she may have to raise the issue with the village. Gene Roberts said only the Portage County Commissioners have the ability to change rates or make exceptions, but only after Council agrees that it would make sense.

Roger Hawkins asked what we can do if people in the village don't like this deal. Rich said if the village keeps the plants they would need to double their rates to take care of the 100-year-old utilities. Roger doubts if the county will go away from getting our water. Rich said the village approached the county.

A man in the audience asked a two-part question. First, who made the rate change and why didn't we get to vote on that? Mayor Clark said Council determined that in order to stay in the black we needed to raise the rates. Ted Bixler said no matter how, we have to get this done. Going with the county will be faster, better, and cheaper.

The second question is; Why hasn't Mantua been putting money aside for improvements? Jon Harmon said nobody wanted to raise the rates, and this Council is the only one that has been willing to do the right thing.

Gene Roberts closed by saying that the EPA is hoping that we are creating a model for other communities, and he thinks it's the best deal the village can get.

Adjournment:

Scott Weaver moved to adjourn at 7:33 pm with a second from Ben Prescott. All eyes on vote.

Mayor Linda Clark

Jenny August, Clerk-Treasurer