

WATER COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 12, 2005
MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chuck Watkins, Chairman
Dr. George Patton, Vice Chairman
Tony Parrott
Chris Venice
Pete Frisina

NON-VOTING MEMBERS:

Bill McNally

ABSENT:

Jim Mallett

STAFF PRESENT:

David Jaeger

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Chuck Watkins at 8:00 A.M.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE MEETING ON AUGUST 24, 2005.

Tony Parrott made the motion and Vice Chairman Dr. George Patton seconded, to approve the minutes from the meeting on August 24, 2005. There was no opposition.

II. DECENTRALIZED SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM.

David Jaeger reported that he and Pete Frisina have done some research on the decentralized sanitary sewer issue. It seems to be a growing strategy for developers and it is likely to continue to grow in Fayette County. They have the ability to get permitted for a private sanitary sewer system from the State. The County is out of the loop as far as being able to prevent something like this from happening. He stated he talked to Jeff Larson with EPD who is with the permitting and compliance department. He discussed some of the concerns that he has from an engineering standpoint. Obviously, the biggest concern is if you have a large subdivision or even a small subdivision or office park on one of these community septic systems. It can have a drain field or a drip field, and could have pre-treatment or not. If you have a system like that, the worst case scenario is that you have a failure of the system. Then you have a hundred homes or businesses that can't use their sewer. Mr. Jaeger stated he discussed this with Mr. Larson and with some technical people at the State. There really is no preventative way to account for that problem. Mr. Larson's response is the State would fine them. That doesn't do any good to repair the problem or get the County out of the cross hairs of the public who feel like they may be responsible for it. It is not a good situation. As an engineer he recommends the County not allow it. But, he does not think that is a possibility, based on what he has been told.

The State requires that a developer provide a statement from the local government supporting the proposed system. Basically, saying that it is consistent with the County's short and long term planning and the County concurs with the project.

Mr. Frisina asked if this is something that is relatively new in the process. Mr. Jaeger

stated he did not know if it is new, but it is in the engineering submittal package. Mr. Frisina stated that he did not think this was the case with the others we have had. Mr. Jaeger commented when he asked if the county says this is not consistent with what we want, and we don't support it, what happens then? The answer was instead of being covered under a general permit, they would then make the developer go for an individual permit, which is a more stringent review by the State, versus a more blanket review. He stated he thinks this is a good thing. On the County's behalf, it would be best if they would say they do not support this, it is not consistent with our planning, and this requires the developer to do a more thorough job submitting his package to the State. The State would review it on a much stricter, stringent engineering level. Assuming the developer has good engineering and is really persistent, he probably will still get a permit. The State does have good requirements in the permitting process. They do require that there be a Class III operator to oversee the operation and maintenance of the system. They require ground monitoring wells, they have buffer requirements, there is a trust indenture to insure that the system would have continuity, and they must attempt to acquire this trust indenture from the local government, if possible. They require a secondary, or reserve drain field to drip application fields. At this point, the local government has the ability to enforce stricter requirements above and beyond what the State has. It would be done in the way of developing ordinances that would be reviewed during the normal review process. That is where he thinks the County can do the best possible job to protect their interest, and the interest of the citizens in making sure, if these are going in, that they are done the best they can be done. Possibly, make the ordinances strong enough that it would discourage some developers from wanting to go this route. If it is possible to have ordinances that increase buffer requirements or increase the size of the reserve land that needs to be set aside for the secondary drain field/drip fields. The yield from the piece of property will be smaller and the developer may be unlikely to go that route if these systems are not really in favor in the county. Another idea would be to have the secondary, or reserve fields mandatory with them being installed during construction and be valved off. If there is a failure of the primary drain field or drip field the secondary field is already in place. It is a matter of just rerouting the flow through different piping, versus having to come up with money to build a reserve field. Another idea is to require additional treatment within the system prior to going to the land application. That could be a biological or chemical or physical treatment that would reduce the strength of the sewer discharge before it is applied underground using a drain field or a drip field. There are systems out there that are using the latest technology that claim to extend the life of drain fields and drip fields because they treat the effluent before it is actually applied to land.

Mr. Jaeger went on to list other things that are possibilities in the way of County measures such as impact fees, and making sure the final plats have statements on them regarding how these lots are sewered; so that people that buy into these properties theoretically know going in, that this is not sewered by individual septic. It is not sewered by a public system and, although it may not be realistic, they should understand that they are taking on some of this responsibility, as an owner for the system, if they have a problem. Ultimately, he thinks it will still come back to people showing up at Commissioners meetings.

If there is a plus to this, it may be that the County could collect sewer use fees, if there is a collection system within public right-of-way, (piping and manhole systems), that would become part of the County infrastructure. It is possible that the County can collect some sewer use fees and help offset some of the County cost to oversee it, if they were in a position of being a trustee of the system. It is not a great scenario for Fayette County, but he does not know that there is anything that can be done to prevent it, because the permitting can be done at the State level.

Mr. Frisina commented that with a septic tank, theoretically, at some point the soil can only absorb so much effluent from a septic tank. His understanding, with these systems, since it is normally treated, that may or may not happen. The soils could continue to absorb for years, since it is treated. From what he knows about these systems, they basically still use a septic tank to capture the solids. The solids have to be disposed of in some form or fashion, like any other sewage treatment plant. The engineer in Columbus suggested that there are certain types of these systems that work much better than others. In his opinion, Fayette County should determine which ones work the best and only allow those type of systems to be installed in Fayette County, since we don't have a choice of not letting them happen. Mandate that the components used are the highest level, and only those components can be used in the County.

Mr. Jaeger commented that the design guidelines from the State say if the wastewater is projected to have levels higher than typical domestic wastewater, then additional treatment is required. If you have, what can be considered in the eyes of the State, a typical domestic wastewater effluent, the septic tank is really all they are going to say that needs to be done. Maybe, through County ordinance there can be the requirement for additional treatment. He stated he thinks that is a good thing. It does create some issue about dealing with some sludge removal, but it decreases the strength of the effluent that goes to the land, which therefore increases the ability for the land to absorb it. The life of the drain field or drip field would theoretically be better. In theory, these things are fine. There is engineering that supports them. They are out there. They work. If that is the case, there is really no issue. We all know that systems don't work all the time. We know about septic failures on individual lots. This is the same scenario, on a bigger scale, with a bigger down side. That is the end of it that he is concerned about and focused on. Mr. Jaeger stated he is not saying the technology is not good or that these systems won't work, in theory and they may work in practice. In order to protect against the worst case scenario, that is what he has been focusing on.

Chairman Watkins questioned if the Commission and this Committee want to make some rules and regulations of what has to be done in the event this system fails. Give notices in the building permits or whatever needs to be done. Have a soil scientist test the soil. What if they decide to do a new phase that would put more capacity on the system? How would the County know? People who are used to a regular sewer system could put everything they can imagine into the septic system. You have to manage a system to keep it from failing. Solids will make a system fail, if they get into the leach field.

Mr. Jaeger stated that what he had read is contradictory. It says the developer is to go to the local Health Department to determine if the local Health Department is going to be the regulator of the permitting process. If not, it goes back to EPD. He asked the compliance officer at EPD, if the local Health Department says they can't do that here, we don't want it, is that the end of the story? He said no, they will permit it.

Chairman Watkins commented that the current permitting process requires you to get a soil scientist. He goes out and does test holes and checks the different types of soil. He will check to find out where it is suitable to put a leach field, and what the perc rate is. Then you have to go back to the Health Department official and the soil scientist, dig a ten foot hole and let them physically look at the hole and the dirt you excavated. They then say if it is suitable and you can put it there. Then you leave it open, they come back to look at it to make sure you put it in properly, the soil throughout the leach field has not changed and it is good soil for a leach field.

Mr. Jaeger commented that the State requires an engineering report before they will give the permit. It does include the soil scientist analysis of the site. As far as the actual construction, who oversees it, and inspects it, he does not know the answer to that.

The committee discussed charging fees to be kept in reserve in the case of system failure. The State requires a performance bond if the trustee is a private entity. Involvement of the local Health Department and preparation of a review for the Commissioners were also discussed.

Mrs. Venice commented that the question needs to be answered by the Board of Commissioners as to what level of involvement do they want to have in community sewer. If the County wants to get involved, we can go one direction. If the County doesn't want to, then we go another direction with ordinances that put the responsibility and the regulations back on the development.

Chairman Watkins commented that there are a lot of questions that need answers. Mr. Jaeger stated that the State recommends the County take local ordinance control to establish their own parameters. They always couch that by saying, they are good until they are challenged. That becomes a legal question about what could be put in an ordinance that won't ultimately be overturned by a challenge. He does not know the answer to that. He does not think there is anything wrong with the County trying to implement a set of guidelines and regulations that the County wants in place. The best approach would probably be to specify performance criteria.

Attorney McNally recommended that Mr. Jaeger and Mr. Frisina continue research on this matter to come up with a set of criteria that we would want, and bring a recommendation back to the committee. We cannot stipulate companies, and experience. We can stipulate standards. Be sure we have leach fields to handle future needs.

Vice Chairman Dr. George Patton made a motion for Mr. Jaeger and Mr. Frisina to gather

information and discuss this item at the next meeting. Tony Parrott seconded and there was no opposition.

Mr. Parrott commented that water not returned to the stream will not be counted for future withdrawal permits. Septic systems do not return water to a stream. Future permits will be based on a percentage of the water that is returned to the stream for downstream use. The State will not let you take water out without putting a certain amount back in for downstream use.

Chairman Watkins stated he has some questions he would like answered at the next meeting. He asked if every system has to have a sanitary sewer person on board to monitor them. Mr. Jaeger replied yes. Mr. Parrott stated they have to have Class III Georgia Operator license. Mr. Jaeger stated they have to spend a certain number of hours per month monitoring the system. Chairman Watkins stated he would like to know what this person's responsibilities are. If each home has a tank, this should eliminate the problem of someone not managing their home system very well. The filter required by the State would keep some problems from entering the sewer system.

Mr. Frisina stated that the systems can be with or without individual tanks at each home. The systems that have been proposed to him have been with individual tanks at each home. The committee agreed requiring individual tanks would be the more desirable system.

Chairman Watkins asked if someone decided to run the system until it failed, could the County require it be turned over before that time. Does the effluent sewage go to a package plant and a process break down the solids, or does it have aerobic treatment and go to a dosing tank, and then to a leach field. Mr. Jaeger stated there are probably a variety of systems out there. There are some that have some solid removal, but it claims they are minimal. Mr. McNally asked what minimum gallons per day, could you buy a package plant.

III. MOVIE REQUEST AT STARR'S MILL.

Mr. Parrott reported that he has another request to do a movie at Starr's Mill. The request is to film at night. They don't want to go inside the mill, just use underneath the mill and the grounds in order to film. They want the right to come back if something goes wrong when they do the filming. They will handle the 24 hour security like the last company did and they will pick up when they leave. The committee discussed the content of the script, charging a fee for use of the site, and developing a policy with criteria to apply to any request.

Mr. Parrott expressed concern that when Fried Green Tomatoes was filmed they did not notify anybody, they showed up and filmed a scene without permission.

Chairman Watkins made a motion to recommend to the Board of Commissioners to deny the request of Paramount Pictures to use the Starr's Mill site for filming of the movie. Vice Chairman Dr. George Patton seconded and there was no opposition.

IV. LAKE HORTON WALKING TRAILS.

Mr. Jaeger presented a property map of Lake Horton showing the properties around the reservoir. He referred to the McCalla property and stated that Mr. Parrott had requested that he give a price to survey and stake the property so we can identify the limits of the land to pursue putting in additional walking trails and be sure we stay on our property. In order to stake it every hundred feet, it will cost around \$3,000.00. That would not be staking the shore of the reservoir. He described the shoreline as marked on the map at normal reservoir pool, the back property lines, setbacks at 50 feet and 100 feet from the shoreline. Once they are at the point where they could stake this, he and Mr. Parrott could go out and identify where these are and possibly layout preliminary additional walking trails.

Mr. Parrott commented that it is allowable to put walking trails in the buffer. Mr. Frisina commented that we probably should stipulate that it be a pervious material. From his understanding other trails used a pervious asphalt that does allow some water to pass through, as opposed to being the other kind of asphalt which sheets off. Mr. Parrott stated it has held up fairly well.

Mrs. Venice stated the concern she had at Horton, where some of the paths currently are, is they are so close to the waters edge, that it does not leave much of the grassed area as filtration. Even though it is a pervious surface for water to filter into the lake, we need to keep in mind this is a reservoir, and she thinks we need to come up with a standard to keep the path, at minimum, away from the waters edge. Be it pervious or impervious.

Mr. Parrott commented that specimen trees and that type of thing, we would need to work around. The adjoining property owners are just wandering through. This is why we need to get the property line surveyed so the site can be secured.

Mrs. Venice made a motion to recommend to the Board of Commissioners to approve an engineering survey of the McCalla property at Lake Horton. Tony Parrott seconded and there was no opposition.

V. BADGER WATER METERS.

Mr. Parrott stated that the Water System went to a radio read water meter system several years ago. Technology is changing. It has been seven years. For example, 1800 meters were read yesterday and there were 21 that have to be reread for different reasons. Anything from the transponder not reading to the water bill being higher than normal and we are double checking because the customer may have a leak. The day before they read 2700 meters and there were about 22 rereads. It has been an excellent system. They read the 1800 meters in about 4 hours and it was about 115 miles.

However, Badger had a contract with one company for transponders and now they are now going to another company. This would mean we would have two computer systems set up in the car. We would have what we currently have and then have one to read newer

services as we trickle new services in. That means, at the end of the first year, we would have 800 meters on one system and 25,000 on the other. He stated he does not want to get into two systems, this piece meal. An option is to purchase a two year supply of the current metering system now. We have warehouse space and could store them. This would mean we would not change for a couple of years. This would get us into the ten year cycle that we ought to look at changing out meters anyway, because of their age. It would not be any more money than we would be spending in the next two years, because we are going to put those meters in anyway. It just means that we take money now and pre-purchase meters so we could continue with the same system. We are talking about \$350,000.00 worth of meters that we would just put in the warehouse. This would be about 2,000 meters. In the past we did change outs of 6,000 at a time and stored them in the warehouse. Storing them is not a problem. He stated that he would like the Water Committee to think about this. We have the opportunity to keep something that is working and extend the life of the current system before we have to consider changing. Probably, before the two years is over technology may be changing again.

Mr. Parrott went on to say they will give us the technology to read, but we would have staff trying to hand two different technologies at the same time. The company that was making the meter and transponder is changing. The new technology will be sold at the same price; they will honor the same price they have always given. They will give us the read equipment as part of the package.

Mr. McNally asked if the new technology is any better, or just different? Mr. Parrott responded that it is just different. The committee discussed if this was the best way to handle this issue. Mr. Parrott explained the Water System has worked with a different billing system the past couple of years. We just recently got the system back working well. Mr. Parrott stated he will bring more information to the committee at the next meeting.

FENCING OF MITIGATION SITE.

Mr. McNally mentioned that Mr. Mixon, a neighbor owner of one of our mitigation sites has called to ask when the site will be fenced. Mr. Parrott responded it would be done with the site work.

There being no further business, Chairman Chuck Watkins adjourned the meeting at 9:35 A.M.

Chuck Watkins

The foregoing minutes were approved at the regular Water Committee meeting on the 26th day of October, 2005.

Lisa McElwaney

