

Village of Fall Creek
Minutes of Public Works, Public Safety & Property Committee Meeting
March 21, 2022

1. **Call to Order:** 4:34 p.m., Village Hall Meeting Room, 122 E. Lincoln Ave., Fall Creek
2. **Roll Call:** Members Present: Chairperson Sheena Kaatz, Trustees Karen Herbison, Matt Mattoon, Karen Strasburg. Members Arriving Later: Tim Raap. Members Absent: None. Other Village Trustees Present: Ben Burch and Karen Hurd. Staff Present: Administrator/Public Works Director Jared McKee, Public Works Employees Josh Kaeding & Jamie Kaeding, Clerk-Treasurer Renee Roemhild. Also Present: 4 citizens.
3. **Certify Open Meeting Law Requirements Have Been Met:** A notice of the meeting and an agenda was posted at the three public places and local newspapers were notified.
4. **Adopt Agenda:**
 - MOTION (Mattoon/Raap) to adopt the agenda as printed. PASSED, without negative vote.
5. **Old Business**
 - A. **Recommendation re: Possible Accepting of Septic at Wastewater Treatment Plant:** Committee Chairperson Sheena Kaatz gave a brief background stating this topic came up last fall; we had a lot of discussion, got a lot of good information from experts and haulers, and received an analysis from the firm that built our plant (Davy Engineering). Since it's coming to the hauling season, it is now time to make a decision. Tim Raap arrived at 4:36 p.m.

Public Works Crewmember Jamie Kaeding spoke stating none of the crew are in favor of accepting septage. He stated multiple operators they've talked with in the area feel it would be a poor decision to accept septage into a small plant like ours, including past employee Bryan Kaatz, who operated the plant from when it started in 2008 to when he left in 2020. Jamie stated in order to accept even a small amount of septage, it would require a significant time investment for the crew – staff would have to be there when the haulers arrive; obtain samples from each load, document and store the samples; estimate and adjust the turn valve to adjust the rate of flow so as to not slug-load the product; there would be more grit and debris to clean out; more repairs due to increased wear & tear on the pumps, and a significant amount of additional time would be needed if they got a bad load. Jamie stated it has been implied in some of these meetings that members of the public works crew have not been properly trained, but that is not true - Josh has been an operator for 9 years, working alongside Bryan Kaatz for many years. Jamie stated that suggesting that training is going to somehow make it easier is not true.

Jamie continued that in addition to considering how the crew feels about it, there are also numbers that need to be considered. The operator from Chippewa stated septage was 1% of their intake. Even though Chippewa has a plant that is more complex and better equipped for handling septage than the Village, they exceeded DNR limits multiple times. The same ratio of 1% for the Village's plant would be approximately 700 gallons a day. Jamie stated based on the example from Chippewa, it is probable to assume that taking that amount would likely cause us to be running in exceedance too. He felt it unfair if operators were asked to do that.

Jamie continued by giving estimates of the revenue that could be gained for taking septage from May 1 to October 31, using the numbers quoted by the haulers. On the high end of projected revenue assuming all gallons were at the higher-priced rate for septage, revenue generated would be \$4800/year; or at the holding tank rate, revenue would be \$1080/year; or using the ratio of septage/holding tank as reported for the Chippewa plant, revenue would be

\$2500/year. Jamie stated he hasn't heard discussed what the cost would be if we got a bad load and felt that should be considered. Jamie assured the Board that if you decide to do it, we will do it wholeheartedly and will do our best to make it work; the crew is not trying to be negative. Jamie stated some of you keep saying "let's just try it", but you aren't the ones that have to deal with the consequences. It ends up being the crew that will deal with the DNR.

Karen Herbison stated the data she had was that the load would go through within 24 hours, that there was a valve that could let it run in slowly. Jamie responded by saying he referenced that in his comments, there is a valve but to make the product flow in at the ratio of 1%, we would have to stretch it out over several days. We can't let it all come into the system within a 24-hour period. Herbison said as far as the grit, she said we talked about getting in a new screener and that would take care of that. Herbison stated everyone needed to be looking forward because the DNR will not be allowing septage to be sprayed onto fields in the future; she stated you will be forced to take it, so get ready for it. Jamie said he respectfully disagreed that the DNR would be forcing us to take it. Herbison stated she thought we would get ahead of the game and make a little money and see if we could do it; we are in debt and this could help offset some debt; it may be a capital project in the future to allow for more. Jamie said it boils down to if the plant can handle it without exceeding limits. Herbison stated our plant was better than Chippewa's. Administrator/Public Works Director Jared McKee responded our plant is not as advanced as Chippewa's; that we don't have the capabilities that the larger plants have.

Karen Hurd questioned the crew asking once you determine the number of turns on the valve it takes to get the right flow, won't it be easier then? Jamie said he thought of that but since you won't know the consistency of each load, there will be a variable. Hurd replied the Chippewa Falls WWTP operator George Hobbs said the pumpers have to tell you how much is holding tank and how much is septage, so it won't be a mystery. Jamie responded they've heard of other plants that had a single load throw off their phosphorus. Kaatz stated that even stuff that is non-toxic can elevate your phosphorus.

Matt Mattoon commented that based on the analysis from Davy Engineering, the engineer who designed the Village's plant, taking septage would be introducing something that has 21 times the BOD concentration than our normal domestic sewage. Davy is saying no more than 2500 gallons a week of septage, period. Mattoon said he was not saying George's comments did not have weight, but he felt the engineer who designed the plant had more weight.

Kaatz questioned how much 50 new homes would affect our setup. McKee said 50 homes would be very beneficial for us because it would be of the same consistency that we already have so it would just be a revenue maker for us. The trick of good sewer plant management is consistency – running the same product through at the same rate. Hurd said it's great to add new homes. She shared some calculations on the gallons per day that new homes would add to the plant's capacity, as well as increased property tax revenue.

Strasburg referred to the comment made about the need to think forward and stated that's what we were doing when we bought the Raether property – getting something that can help with both utility and property tax revenue; there are people that want to live in the Village and are waiting for a choice of lots to build on. Before starting something that will have risk at the sewer plant, Strasburg stated she would like the efforts to go to the economic development concepts of the Raether property.

Raap stated the goal of the plant was for growth of homes in the Village. It wasn't designed for accepting septage. Raap said being an engineer himself, putting something in that it wasn't designed for makes him skeptical; it's possible to do but it's pretty limited. The bottom line is that it wasn't designed for it and we don't have the tools for the employees to get immediate feedback as to what it's doing to the system, they have to send off samples and a week later get the results. But, Raap continued, it's in our ordinance so do we keep it in our ordinance and just update the fees, or do we remove it entirely from the ordinance?

Hurd read a portion of the engineer's letter, saying she feels the plant we have can handle the 2500 gallons a week. She feels we'll establish a relationship with the haulers and there will be a trust factor that they're not going to give us any junk. She doesn't think it's a great risk. She thinks it's worth considering.

Kaatz wanted to know what the cost and ramifications would be if there was a significant upset in the biology of the plant. McKee stated statistically, if you do it long enough, you will get a bad load even if you do have good haulers. Kay Curtin of Rural Water said that when she was an operator it was one of her best haulers that killed the plant because he didn't know what was in a load. McKee stated the cost isn't so much in getting the biological seed bugs to restart; the real problem is the months it takes month to get the plant back to normal, being out of DNR compliance for quite a long period of time as the plant has to rebuild the microbiology. In the meantime, it would be like dumping partially treated sewage into the Eau Claire River - that's the biggest concern.

Karen Strasburg said it seems like if there is a problem, any profits that we would possibly make would quickly be eaten up. Jamie talked about the grit and the wear & tear on the mixers at the beginning of the process control tanks, saying it cost \$3000 to rebuild the mixer, \$8300 to replace – that would wipe out the revenue earned.

- MOTION (Raap/Mattoon) to recommend to the Board to update the fees, to keep the trip charge the same but update the septage fees to something in a \$90 range and the holding tank to \$14; in addition, to have the public works department research the cost for equipment that would help the public works crew get results for real time sampling. Also, any of the revenue earned would be escrowed into sewer. PASSED, without negative vote.
- MOTION (Mattoon/Raap) to recommend to the Village Board that we take a maximum of 2500 gallons septage a week based on the engineer's recommendations, so we have the ability to deny a hauler if we are at our limit. PASSED, with Kaatz voting no.
- MOTION (Mattoon/Kaatz) to recommend to the Village Board that we end this discussion, that we do not go forward with accepting septage, that we update the ordinance at this time to say we do not take septage.
Discussion followed with McKee asking for clarification that if you pass this motion you'd see two ordinance amendments come before the Board at the regular meeting. Raap stated the last motion would trump the other motions, so you would only see the amendment to say we do not take septage but if McKee wanted to prepare two, that would be fine.

Voting on the above motion. PASSED, with Raap and Herbison voting no.

6. New Business

A. Sidewalk Bid/Repairs: Kaatz stated the idea was brought up to see if there could be a price-break for doing multiple sidewalks in town that need repair. Jamie Kaeding spoke that there may not be any price adjustment because it is expensive for the contractor to do small sections all throughout the Village. Mattoon said it might be an idea to offer to the contractor when there is another road project in progress. McKee questioned if we have an interest in this, would the Village be signing the contract with the contractor and getting the money from the property owner, or would it just be passing along the information. Kaatz stated in her mind the Village would not be the one contracting. Kaatz stated to note that the next time there is a street project to consider it then.

7. Adjourn @ 6:01 p.m.

Renee Roemhild, Clerk-Treasurer