

Casco Township Board of Trustees
Special Meeting to Discuss The Proposed Regional Water/Sewer Authority
@ 11:00am
Friday, February 26, 2016

Allan Overhiser called meeting to order at 11:00 am.

Present: Overhiser, Brenner, Jessup, Winfrey and also present was

Absent: Judy Graff – absent because of family health issues.

Ron Bultje , Township Attorney, and 9 other interested people.

Allan explained that this meeting is designed to be a meeting to talk about the Proposed Regional Water/Sewer Authority. Overhiser reviewed and summarized the various meetings and presentations from June to present. In addition Overhiser explained the history of the relationship with the City of South Haven in providing the townships with water/sewer service.

The city conducted a study funded by a grant from the DEQ resulting in identified problems and planned upgrades. Under our current agreement the townships are required to financially participate and portions of these planned updates. The authority felt that given the additional fees that our users would incur that future capacity should be addressed and out of that the Regional Water/Sewer Authority concept was born.

Ron Bultje explained that water/sewer issues cost a lot of money. The townships have bought into the system. Our capacity will be used up in the future and the Authority is a way to address that need. The townships will be responsible for the repairs of the Sewer plant. Some concern that the township will not have a say. They will have a say.

Jean VanZoren Will the township water/sewer service expand beyond the current established area identified in the townships master plan? Allan said that all expansions in each of the respective municipality shall be the decision of each respective boards for example, expansion in Casco Township will require approval of the Casco Board.

Dave Campbell asked about township customers being billed equitable for improvements that they benefit from and was concerned about improvements that township users don't benefit from.

Overhiser and Stein discussed the improvements and referenced the engineers presentation which assessed fees based on the benefit derived. For example, pipes running down Kalamazoo St. that only benefit City residents will be paid for by City sources. In contrast improvements that benefit

Townships and City users will be paid for by all rate payers. For example a lift station that serves portions of the townships and the city.

Diane asked that the old agreement doesn't address that the city has eminent domain.

Ron Bultje answered that under the current arrangement the South Haven/Casco

water/sewer authority have eminent domain and going forward it is necessary to transfer those powers to the new authority. The authority may need to use it if we were unable to obtain an easement and can prove necessity.

Diana Osterman asked why would it be necessary to hire a professional to run the authority?

Ron explained that as the scope of activity increases it may be necessary to obtain the services of a full time person. For example today Casco Township is run by the supervisor and a board of Trustees. But in Laketown Township they have decided to hire a full time township manager whom handles the day to day operation. In addition Ron said as the system grows there will be more work.

Hal Cousins said there are people that want to build in Casco but the hookup fee is too expensive.

Overhiser and Stein discussed issues surrounding the debt repayment and that connection charges have not increased since 2007.

Diane asked why the conflict of interest is addressed in the proposed agreement and Ron Bultje said that it is a good thing to have procedures in place to determine when a conflict of interest arises. In absence of such procedures it is often difficult for individuals and boards to determine how to handle some situations.

Ron Bultje explained how the township has been and will be involved with issues in regards to water Sewer in the township and the city. In addition the townships can't just quit and think they are done and not participate and finally Ron concluded that having a seat at the table and township representation should produce decisions that are equitable to the township users.

Overhiser stated that the townships have enjoyed a very good relationships with various city leaders in the last 20 yrs. There have been many issues and changes that have come up and working with those leaders equitable solutions have been worked out. Finally, Overhiser believes that it would be better with township representation that understands the high cost of Township users are paying for water/sewer sitting at the table helping to make the future decisions.

Lu made motion to adjourn. Josiah seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00noon