

MINUTES OF SEWER FEASIBILITY COMMITTEE

August 9, 2017

The Ad Hoc Sewer Feasibility Committee met on Wednesday, August 9, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in the Terrace Park Community Building. Committee Chair, Mayor Tom Tepe led the meeting. Councilmembers in attendance: John Gaskey, Jeff LeMay, Pax Lindell, Holly Purcell, and Regina Sharp. In addition, committee members Joe Alter, Carrie Carothers, David Center, Marc Michaelson, Amy Roe, and Jane Yancey attended. Village Administrator/Chief of Police Gerald Hayhow also attended. Councilmember Judith Lehman was absent.

Mayor Tepe called the meeting to order. He asked committee members to introduce themselves.

- Carrie Carothers has lived in the Park for 7 years and has three kids (7th, 5th, 3rd graders). She has a newer septic system. She has a law degree but has not practiced in 10 years. Feels like sewers are something we need to investigate and figure out one way or another once and for all.
- Amy Roe has lived in the Park for 6 years and has three kids (4, 2 and newborn). She is a Sibcy Cline Real Estate Agent and is concerned about her clients who are affected. She has a dry well that works like a charm.
- John Gaskey has two kids (7th and 10th grades). He is a 20 year resident of the Park, on council, and has an old dry well system. He needs new septic so this is a timely topic.
- Dave Center has lived on Denison for 2 years and has 2 kids (ages 10 & 7).
- Jeff LeMay lives on Floral and is a long time TP resident. He has 4 kids, works for P&G, has a newer septic, and is on council.
- Marc Michaelson has done work on 35 houses in Terrace Park. Septic systems are the most frustrating part of his job.
- Mayor Tom Tepe lives on Yale, is a 10 year resident, an attorney in real estate law, and has a new septic system.
- Joe Alter has lived on Myrtle for 3 years. He has 3 kids (ages 9, 7 & 7), a dry well, and is a lawyer at AK Steele.
- Jane Yancey has been a Terrace Park resident since 1993, her son will turn 30 this month, and she is an architect.
- Holly Purcell has lived on Yale for 25 years, is an MHS grad, on council, and has a dry well that works.
- Jerry Hayhow is the new Village Administrator (this is his 1st day in that position); he has worked in the Park for 32 years.
- Pax Lindell is a lifelong Terrace Park resident. He has 3 kids (11, 9 & 8th grades). His dry well works flawlessly, he is on council and chairs the Public Works Committee, so this will fall on his committee.

The chair asked for a show of hands who wants sewer, who wants septic – overwhelming support for sewers. If we can do it, it seems like it will be better, environmentally, etc. The job of the committee is to go from 30,000 foot overview, all the way to ground level to the mechanics of exactly what it would take. What do we need to have to present the best information to the general public so they can make an informed decision? Hoping to come out of this with a consensus. The two most important things to consider are the physical and financial. Can sewers physically exist here and how much will that cost?

Other relevant points during the discussion:

- If we do nothing, your drywell can continue to work as long as you don't do work on your house.
- In 2025, are they "really, really going to crack down?" Tim Ingram, County Health Commissioner -- no not going to throw you out of your house 12/31/25 if you don't convert to the new system. So if we do nothing, we will continue as we have. So we know that option. The purpose of this group is to figure out if converting to sewers is physically and financially feasible.
- Is anyone going to contest in court? It's not broken don't fix it. We should consider if we want to contest this in court because Hamilton County has different ramifications, design etc. Everything is more expensive in Hamilton County – even with the same installer.
- Hamilton County is extremely expensive. In Clermont County, right across the river with the exact same soil content, septic systems are less expensive. The most expensive Hamilton County septic is \$70,000, the most expensive Clermont is \$18,500. Each county writes the criteria for their septic systems. There are only two approved designers in Hamilton County and you have to spend \$3000 just for design. Clermont County or Warren County, the design and soil samples are \$800 for BOTH. Neighboring counties are all different, why not one standard?
- Cuyahoga County is not allowing the grace period until 2025 – making people convert today.
- We need to ask why is it different in Hamilton County than in Clermont County? Same soil conditions and twice the cost in Hamilton County vs. Clermont 1 mile away? Why?
- Are we suggesting as an option evening the playing field on price? Putting in a new septic system for \$16,000 is a lot closer to \$12,000 per lot for sewer.
- Should we have a lawyer assess the standard that Hamilton County applies?
- There is a pressing need to clarify for people who are selling houses right now.
- Also consider that we have half the drywells in Hamilton County, we should be able to negotiate a better sewer price than \$12,000 per house. Possible we could get it down to \$8,000 over 20 years.
- Even if we could even it to \$12,000 for septic and \$12,000 for sewers, think septic still lowers property values. People are scared of septic.
- Also consider if you go to the new septic system, you have to have room for the new system, plus another space equal to that in case that system goes. Many lots in TP do not have that space.
- It is definitely worth asking the question, why are we treated differently than Clermont County? Is the county pushing us away from septic systems?
- 670 out of 750 Terrace Park Residents have drywells. We are over 1/2 of ALL drywells in all other municipalities in Hamilton County.
- This is determined by the state? Yes, but the County administers the law from the state. They have some discretion.
- Will call and ask why the discrepancy between Hamilton County and Clermont. Hayhow will find out the name of the two designers in Hamilton County and call them to ask about discrepancies.

- The County has discretion. A client of Jane and Marc has lawyers who have talked to Hamilton County and were basically told, if Terrace Park makes the decision to go with sewers, then they won't have to put in a new septic in the meantime.
- We should set ground rules with Hamilton County. They have to work with us for the next however many years, otherwise there's no incentive for us to do it.
- The next meeting will be with Hamilton County Health Commissioners
- What is the penalty if 2025 rolls around and we haven't complied? They could declare a nuisance—health emergency. State and Hamilton County would come in. It's possible Hamilton County would/could withhold building permits. Also in 2025 they could declare a public nuisance and force sewers in here—no discount, no leverage.
- If we decide we want sewers, Hamilton County would do a poll to find out if a majority of people would want sewers.
- How is the sewer decision going to be made? We don't know. Ballot? Council? Probably wouldn't do it without everyone chiming in either through formal ballot or informal ballot. This decision is far greater than the 6 hands of council. Both Hamilton Co/Metropolitan SD and Milford SD would do a poll and without a majority in favor, they would not install sewers. Milford SD has the capacity to take us on. However, Hamilton County will subsidize and not sure Milford would do the same. Also Hamilton County has a trunk line down the middle of the street. MSD – Metropolitan Sewer District (owned by Ham Co run by the city).
- Question to Hamilton County, if we are headed in the direction of sewers, what will you do for us? Will you allow the dry well systems to exist while we head in this direction?
- Want to go to a contractor and say I have x number of homes that currently have sewer hookup in the back, what are you going to charge my residents per foot to bring it to the street in front? Then get a price for the people who have septic in the front. Then maybe have a certain number of contractors who have a contracted rate who will do this work. Position now where we have enough volume to make it work for us. It's coming, let's be proactive and get the best deal we can. Negotiate the best possible deal we can between MSD and HC and Clermont. The sooner we act, the more leverage we have. Trunk line from Hamilton County goes in front of the apartments. It's possible that if we are bringing them 900 rate payers, they will pay to bring the trunk to us. It would be a huge capital project. They want us.
- Should we do an informal poll now? What if the majority of residents say, I don't want it, I'm happy with my system now. Why then should we spend this time and resources, pursuing? Money is a big issue. Money is a big black hole. \$12,000 max over 20 years + hook up to street + decommissioning your system. The bill stays with the property so if you move you leave it. There is a group of contractors Hamilton County works with on decommissioning so they know how to do it. Still, reminder, right now we've got numbers which should go to a discount of some sort. People are choosing not to do work so they don't have to convert and pay for a new system, so we are losing value. Village is losing income – our only real source of revenue is property taxes.
- Are they really going to be able to make do with 4 inch pipe? Are they really going to be able to go under the street? Have they done it anywhere else? Are they going to get halfway through and say oh no we are going to have to rip up all the streets and it's going to take 5 years?

- Huge details, engineering, county not going to do all the assessments without guarantees. They've definitely done it so they can come up with a pretty good estimate. Meet with Clermont County and MSD? The Hamilton County Health Department wants to help us develop a plan. Use all resources available.
- Next meeting will be with the Hamilton County Health Department. Hamilton County wants to help us because they have everything to gain by getting rid of these 600 drywells. Possible that we could create our own sewage treatment plant. What tools can they give us?
- Mayor meeting with new County Commissioner Denise Driehaus. He will ask her how involved she wants to be with this.
- Sewer installation (front of house to the street) capped at \$12,000 per house, the rest of Hamilton County pays the additional. So if the cost is \$18,000 per house, we pay max \$12,000 and the difference is spread to all MSD customers. We need to get the numbers. Talk to the Health Commissioner and his people. We are interested and looking, how can you help. What can the health department do for us? We are looking for a way for us to work with them and see where we are and say give our builders a break.
- Any energy in repealing this law? Change the law you still have septic tanks.

Committee agreed to the following going forth:

- Standing date for this committee will be the second Wednesday of the month. Next meeting: Sept 13 at 7p.m.
- Suggest having 3-4 designated people to talk and ask questions of guests. Other members can pass notes and questions to them. Tepe will call Milford and see if it's something they would even be interested in.
- Meet with the Hamilton County Health Dept first and then see what to do next.
- How to inform people? Make sure people know about the process. More information is better.
- Names of committee will be on the website tomorrow.
- Pax will be the spokesperson for the committee for the *Village Views* and other outlets.