

WASTE WATER COMMITTEE UPDATE

A Sewer is a Beautiful Thing

One of the two most important committees working to help Amenia grow is the Waste Water Committee (WWC). It will have the biggest impact on business development, but it is also the committee with the most significant problems.

First among these is land. The transfer of land from Silo Ridge to the Town has been delayed as Silo Ridge investigates the proposed processing method. If transferred, this land will serve both the Town and the discussed Silo Ridge development. Because of the immediate need in the Town center (see below), a contingency search for a new location is already underway. But time is being lost, and cost may become a factor. Two new sites, however, have been identified by the Committee. One is owned by the Town, and the other is available for sale. Each is being investigated, and reports will be made at future meetings.

The second problem is immediate need. Waste water treatment is so significant an issue for Amenia because it isn't just about bringing and growing businesses. As Committee Chair Darlene Riemer explains, *"We will not be able to sustain what is already on Main Street... We need the sewer to not only increase business opportunities, but to protect our drinking water. One of the town wells is located in the vicinity of several septic systems."* In fact, several private septic systems have been cited by the Health Department for failures, and need to be addressed.

The third significant issue is cost. The sewer, by law, must be paid for by the people who use it or are within the "district." Riemer said, *"We are looking into options for elderly with fixed income, who may not be able to afford it, no matter what the cost."* She further explained that the cost assessment criteria have not been established yet, but commercial estab-

lishments will pay more than a single family unit. Single family dwellings will pay "typically, one benefit unit." Prior to September 11, when the world changed for all of us, Rural Funding projected they could provide 75% of the cost. Now, that percentage has dwindled, and we are competing for funds with other towns. This means we need to move quickly to get the final application processed. Rural Funding will help guide us to other assistance sources, which makes the presence of Candace Balmer, our Rural Funding representative, so critical to our committee.

The sewer "district" as originally proposed extended south to Lake Amenia Road, west to Xe Sogne Restaurant, north to the Amenia Elementary School, and east to Mygatt Road. This incorporates the "core" area surrounding Main Street, as well as Railroad Avenue and Depot Hill, bringing the total to about 160,000 gallons per day to be processed/treated. This would allow for open lots to be built upon, as well as increased density and use in the center of town with shops, restaurants, hair salons and apartments. It would also allow for clustered garden apartments and additional building on the Main streets. The official district area for the sewer would have to be voted upon by referendum, and gallons (used) per day

would be the basis for calculations to develop cost figures.

MEMBERS: Councilman Bill Carroll, Michael Chamberlin, Bill Flood, Allison Hale, Bonnie Hundt, Moira Kelly, Tony Robustelli, Councilman Roger Russell, Darlene Riemer, Chair (Vicki Doyle, recording minutes), Candace Balmer (Rural Funding representative, no cost to the town), and Rich Rennia, P.E., engineer from Morris Associates, paid consultant.

MEETINGS: Mondays, from 5 to 6 PM at Town Hall.

Why do we need a Sewer System?

(from www.HowThingsWork.com)

Each time you flush the toilet or you wash something down the sink's drain, you create **sewage** (also known in polite society as **wastewater**). One question that many people might ask is, "Why not simply dump this wastewater onto the ground outside the house, or into a nearby stream?" There are three main things about wastewater that make it something you don't want to release into the environment:

[1] It stinks. If you release wastewater directly into the environment, things get very smelly very fast.

[2] It contains harmful bacteria. Human waste naturally contains coliform bacteria (for example, E. coli) and other bacteria that can cause disease. Once water becomes infected with these bacteria, it becomes a health hazard.

[3] It contains suspended solids and chemicals that affect the environment. For example:

- Wastewater contains nitrogen and phosphates that, being fertilizers, encourage the growth of algae. Excessive algae growth can block sunlight and foul the water.
- Wastewater contains organic material that bacteria in the environment will start decomposing. When they do, these bacteria consume oxygen in the water. The resulting lack of oxygen kills fish.
- The suspended solids in wastewater make the water look murky and can affect the ability of many fish to breathe and see.

The increased algae, reduced oxygen and murkiness destroy the ability of a stream or lake to support wildlife, and all of the fish, frogs and other life forms quickly die.

No one wants to live in a place that stinks, is full of deadly bacteria and cannot support aquatic life. That's why communities build wastewater treatment plants and enforce laws against the release of raw sewage into the environment.