

CITY OF ORONOCO  
SPECIAL JOINT COUNCIL MEETING  
WITH WATER & SEWER COMMITTEE & PLANNING & ZONING  
COMMITTEE AND PHIL WHEELER (OLMSTED COUNTY)  
Monday, August 29, 2005  
6:30 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Bertsinger called the meeting to order at 6:34PM.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Kevin McDermott, Joy Bertsinger, Tom Novak, Jackie Hall, Clerk Nymann, Brian Breider-Planning & Zoning Committee, Terry Lee-Olmsted County Water, Sheila Craig-SE MN Wastewater Initiative, Phil Wheeler-Olmsted County Planning, Ross Parker-Water & Sewer Committee, Larry Stolp-Water & Sewer Committee, Richard Heilscher-Water & Sewer Committee Member, Lori Long-Water & Sewer Committee, Lance Sorensen-Interested Citizen, Charlie Fried-Water & Sewer Committee  
Absent: Council Member Scott Keigley

III. MEETING

Introductions made of individuals present. This is an informational meeting. Tom Novak and Phil Wheeler will do the presentations. Map information of septic and wells in the City was provided by Joy Bertsinger and Sheila Craig, and Novak put the info on the map. They first identified parcels of land septic system issuing dates from 1961-2004. Terry Lee stated there was a fairly significant design changed in the 1970's. The older systems have smaller lots; which is part of the challenge to have enough room to replace the septic systems. Novak questioned whether the City should consider Zumbro Hills and Cravath Subdivisions, which are in the township. The map needs more fine tuning and should be more complete in a few months, because there were missing pin numbers, and other incomplete information. There are a lot of variables in the systems that determine the reliability of the well. The City did not receive the grant to test septic systems in the city. The city wants to use this information, and the previous info for the future outlook.

There is a breaking point for the water supplies. The new developments are going down to Jordan (Sandstone) vEIN. But, before 1960 they had grouted wells, poor water supplies, and pollution can flow down the casings. Terry Lee suggested that the City look at wells as a real concern.

- Sand point wells discussed and when the lake is low, water pressure is low. Lake and aquifer are the same; whereas, generally aquifer drains to the lake. Immediate shores of the lake are not safe supplies.
- General recommendation is that new sand point wells not allowed since the 1960's.

Phil Wheeler

- Population Forecasts (Scenarios) county growing because of employment growth. State demographers office has done projections by 2030 Olmsted County increases. This is figured by divided jurisdictions and share of county growth. Small cities accounted for 16% of County growth from 1990-2004. From 2000-2004 small cities increased to 18.8%. Through 2020, it is forecasted that small cities increase to be 25% (high end). Oronoco accounted for 6% of the same of small city growth from 90's and 3% in 00's. Assumed share of 5% (current conditions) in 2030 the estimate is population of 1,274 (15%) or 1,542 (25%). Investment on improved infrastructure, the city could grow to 3,009 (15%) and 4,463 (25%) for populations in the year 2030. If assuming improved infrastructure, the city would be in the larger competitive picture for population growth. 25% high end of the forecast, 15% low end of the forecast. Novak indicated Oronoco already has 2 huge developments which would add to the population forecast. Phil indicated that style of housing demand will be different in the future. If forecasting were to go by development planning, instead of demographics, the population forecasts would be higher. Novak asked Phil if he was surprised there are 2 developers aggressively selling lots. He doesn't know details of costs. They are \$65,000 - \$125,000 lots. Probably same as Fitzpatrick. Price range is part of the suburban lot market, which overall accounts for 5% of the county population. Bertsinger asked when Oronoco was looked at for population projections, was consideration given to the Highway 52 Reconstruction and overpass. Wheeler stated that's why the 25% FORECAST is in there. Oronoco will have transportation but if it had city services, it would grow faster than Byron and Pine Island. Bertsinger asked Phil what he saw the county moving toward as far as lot sizes. Wheeler stated that most populations of the county are developing in cities (small lots ½ acre lots). Most people have modest 4 bedroom homes. Is the County providing homes for those people with entry level jobs? Wheeler said that would be difficult for Oronoco to do because it doesn't have City water and sewer. For cities that don't have that job base, it's hard to determine. Future energy shortfalls will change things also. The 70's energy shortage slowed down employment growth, hence housing growth. Brian Breider asked whether the shared well/shared septic for the new developments, should be interim or long term. Wheeler stated that the aquifer is so deep, most subdivisions have shared wells; the county has that preference. Water usage by household fluctuates quite a bit. Fluctuations are averaged out on shared systems, so the system lasts longer, and stays in better condition. Environmental standpoint is that there are benefits also because of shared systems such as longevity of systems, and well managed septic systems compared to connected sewer system is more economically feasible. Can the city of Oronoco mandate residents to show well maintained septic systems? Phil stated that there is not a utility to handle this on the county level; but, the city could do this. Will that change in the county? County is looking at setting up a data base for the entire county, and it is designed to automatically keep track of pumping and who is compliant. (for all septic, individual and shared). State code requires inspection every three years, and this is a mandatory requirement, although there isn't

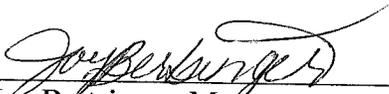
personnel available to monitor it. The new developments have wording in their development agreements that these reports are required. There are examples of operating a sewer utility from a city. Fixes a lot of problems in a short period of time. Wheeler also stated that a normal conventional septic system still has nitrates contamination to groundwater; and it could impact the drinking water. There is no physical barrier between the surface and where the groundwater is drawn. Within its geology, the city is seeing the leading edge of the contamination of nitrates in the water. Lee suggested the City look at a long range approach. Bertsinger said the City is trying to plan for the future with the Interim Residential ordinance where density could not be less than 1 acre, and not more than 2 acres; and having developers place water/sewer lines that could be provided to the City. WAC & SAC fees discussed. Novak asked can a City stop growth? Wheelers' opinion was that it does have the ability to stop growth if it does not have the adequate facilities provided by the city or developer. The city could choose not to grow. Olmsted County is using Mayo clinics employment forecasts as a basis for their population forecasts. Wheeler said if the City continues to grow, it will need to make some changes. 1 acre lots feasible if there's a plan to connect in the future; and, if not, the nitrate contamination will expand. He stressed that the water supply problem should be addressed. Part of the on site treatment problems would be solved through shared wells, or municipal wells; and then homes would be able to replace their septic. Water lines are the same cost as putting in both water and sewer lines. Bertsinger asked what a priority would be if you look at the City in 'quadrants'. Wheeler suggested to look at the small lots first, which would be addressing the density issue; and leave large developments out for now. The state preempted control of herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers. But city would have difficulty enforcing. Education could take care of the problem. Fertilizer should be factored in too. Lee suggested eliminating wells connecting upper aquifer to lower aquifer is something the city should look at. Fix up fund is where well sealing could be an acceptable activity through the county. Also, look at obtaining loan assistance for residents. Bertsinger asked if you have a large well, and a neighbor has a small uncased, ungrouted well, could it affect the large well. Yes it could. Novak questioned how the northern expansion of Rochester will affect the city? What is the potential of the city hooking up with Rochester? Wheeler presented a map north to 90<sup>th</sup> street (85<sup>th</sup> St is Oronoco Estates); in the Rochester Future Land Use Map, everything north of 65<sup>th</sup> relies on temporary lift stations. Long term it could be 20-25 years before Rochester gets out to Oronoco Estates (getting from city limits to the line at Oronoco estates would be a problem for the city). If the city wants, the county can look at it in depth. However, per lot it could be costly. If relying on commercial development to pay for it, to expect thousands of acres of commercial land could be overly optimistic. Novak stated the NW side of Rochester is growing, and pressure from developers could increase the demand for growth. It was stated that developer absorbs all the costs in Rochester, the City does not. Wheeler stated that the north end of town is in competition with west, southwest part of town, and development north of town more expensive to develop. Discussed length of time for growth in Rochester. Sometimes forecast

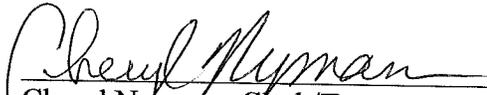
are bad. The sewage treatment plan can make it until later, but the water issue for the City of Oronoco cannot wait. Will there ever be a separate sewage treatment facility on the north side of Rochester? Wheeler said that it's been looked at on the north side of the Zumbro, but every time they looked at it, it concluded to expand the current system and put in lifts. Charlie Fried stated that Rochester pays for ½ sewage extension with sales tax and that Oronoco residents pay for that too. Everyone is helping pay for the older systems in Rochester. Sales tax a good way to pay for this. Would Rochester have the capacity to take on Oronoco septic? Wheeler said yes.

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

**McDermott motioned to adjourn at 8:15PM , Hall second; all in favor, motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted:

  
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Joy Bertsinger, Mayor

  
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Cheryl Nymann, Clerk/Treasurer