

**Oneida County Sewer District SSO Abatement Project
Steering Committee Meeting Report
June 25, 2009
5:30 p.m.
New York Mills Community Center**

Municipality	Representative	Attendance
The Village of Clayville		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Nancy Sheppard	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Mike Steiger	x
The Town of Deerfield		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Scott Mahardy Peggy Boshart	
<i>Community Delegate</i>		
Town of Frankfort		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Joseph Kinney	
<i>Community Delegate</i>		
Village of Holland Patent		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Michael Bennison David Wilcox	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Peter Gaige	x
The Town of Marcy		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Brian Scala Keith Schuderer	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Carson Sorrell	x
The Town of New Hartford		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Earle Reed Roger Cleveland	x
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Scot Owens	
Alternate	Christine Krupa	x
The Village of New Hartford		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Donald J. Ryan Don Bathke	x
	John Grygiel	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Richard Sherman	
The Village of New York Mills		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Robert Maciol Joseph Urban	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	George Majka	
The Village of Oriskany		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Don Rothdiener Mick O'Connnor	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Chris Burch	

The Town of Paris		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Felix Cardillo	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Jim Hogel	x
Town of Schuyler		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Kenneth Dodge	x
<i>Community Delegate</i>		
The City of Utica		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee OR Designee	David Roefero Deb Day Mike Mahoney	
The Village of Whitesboro		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Richard Pugh Chester Kowalski	x x
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Joe Lazenby	
The Town of Whitestown		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Charles R. Gibbs II Sal Granato	x
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Bill Schmitt	
The Village of Yorkville		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Bruno Petruccione Anthony Leone, Jr.	x
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Ken Schaaf	x
Oneida County		
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Bruce Brodsky	x
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Harvey Yando	x
<i>County Executive Chief of Staff</i>	Al Candido	
Oneida County Sewer District		
Commissioner Counsel	Steve Devan Peter Rayhill	x
Project Consulting Team		
Shumaker Engineering	Karl Schrantz	x
	Jim Luz	x
Paige Group	Nancy Pattarini	x
Paige Group	Liz Warfel	x
Paige Group	Diane Stirling	x
Fiscal Advisors	Mark Colopy	x
Guests in Attendance:		
New York State DEC, Region 6	Judy Drabicki Skip Shoemaker	
League of Women Voters	Barbara Weaver	

Meeting Highlights

Working Group Report

Steering Committee Chair, Roger Cleveland, provided a report on the Working Group's meeting with Michael Quinn, Deputy Commissioner, from the County of Erie Department of Environment & Planning, Division of Sewerage Management. The following information regarding Erie County's sewer district was shared:

- Erie County's sewer district was formed from a series of mergers of the smaller districts within the county
- Erie County was in a similar situation to Oneida County regarding their sewer system and, with the support of the county's political leaders, the county decided to begin acquiring the smaller districts to form the larger system
- It was acknowledged that this type of system growth may be more expensive in the beginning years, but over time, the larger system is better able to absorb the cost of maintenance and repair
- In this model, the district's needs are spread across the entire district alleviating the financial burden on any one local community
- Erie County found this to be a more cost-effective way to operate the sewer systems from a county administrative perspective as well as on behalf of the ratepayers

Mr. Quinn will be sending a copy of his presentation so it can be shared with the Steering Committee.

A question was presented from the Steering Committee whether any consideration had been given to merging the needs of the sewer district with the water authority, thus creating a sewer and water authority. Mr. Cleveland stated that the Working Group and full Steering Committee will be considering a number of alternative institutional structures, and that the Steering Committee is expected to make a recommendation to the County on which approaches should be studied in greater depth. Commissioner Devan informed the group that a DEC grant application was submitted through HOCCPP requesting funding for an institutional structure study.

Report on the 6/26/09 Meeting with DEC

Karl Schrantz, P.E., of Shumaker Engineering and Steve Devan, P.E., Oneida County Commissioner of Water Quality and Water Pollution Control, were asked by Mr. Cleveland to summarize the meeting held with the Department of Environmental Conversation (DEC) at their Albany headquarters earlier that day.

Mr. Schrantz reported the DEC was provided an overview of the consent order compliance study completed to date, which shows that the magnitude of the overall project has changed substantially since the consent order was issued in 2007. According to Mr. Schrantz, the Oneida County Sewer District team also demonstrated that they were developing a long-term solution, considering everything from organizational structure to

proper budgeting practices. It was reported the meeting lasted two hours with many good questions and topics for discussion. The DEC also strongly endorsed our community's Steering Committee process so that member communities can play a major role in the development of a solution. Mr. Schrantz reported that Regional Director Judy Drabicki stated that the DEC wants to remain very involved throughout the process so it is fully informed when the report is submitted in July 2010. Mr. Schrantz also said that the DEC offered to attend a future Steering Committee meeting to discuss funding and how they might help move funding forward. However, Schrantz reminded the Steering Committee that it is unlikely that grant money will pay for all repair costs and that communities should begin preparing realistic sewer budgets which may include accumulating funds within a reserve account dedicated to sewer system operation, maintenance, and repair.

Mr. Cleveland also attended the NYSDEC meeting and concurred that NYSDEC was pleased to see progress being made, and that the District is investing money to address the issues.

DEC officials at the meeting included:

- Judy Drabicki, Regional Director
- Skip Shoemaker, Regional Engineer
- Steve Botsford, Regional Water Engineer
- Mark Plotz, Assistant Director, Division of Water
- Shane Mitchell, Permit Writer
- Bill Raverly, Permit Writer
- Joe DiMura, Director, Bureau of Water Compliance
- Sandi Allen, DEC

Also in attendance were:

- James Geiger, NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation
- Jimmy Ng, NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation

It is expected that meetings with the DEC will continue to take place quarterly.

Commissioner Devan relayed that DEC is considering sponsoring another seminar in our area on the topics of infrastructure and funding. However, the last two local DEC-sponsored events were poorly attended. Devan pointed out the need for better local attendance at these events to show interest and encourage continuing support from the DEC.

Tentative Expectations for 2010 Report to DEC

Vice Chair Carson Sorrell asked Mr. Schrantz to discuss the report that must be submitted to DEC a year from now. Mr. Schrantz outlined tentative ideas for what that report might include:

- Results of the investigation to date and what repairs will be required
- Discussion on how repairs will help eliminate the I/I problem
- Recommendations on institutional structure (possibly several different options)

- Budgeting and financing proposal
- Plan for a long-term maintenance
- Outline of implementation schedule

Mr. Sorrell observed that the Steering Committee would like to have input on draft versions of the report. Mr. Schrantz agreed, saying that they would be seeking the guidance of the Steering Committee since the final report and plan will ultimately become public policy.

Jim Luz of Shumaker Engineering emphasized the need for a defined institutional structure in the plan. He noted that this is a critical component in meeting the DEC's requirement that we develop a plan that is implementable. Luz stated that the plan could initially be based on the existing structure with the understanding that it may change over time. Mr. Sorrell pointed out that all communities involved would have to be in agreement regarding the structure.

There was general agreement that discussion of institutional structure alternatives needs to be a high priority for the Steering Committee.

Structure and Funding

The group explored various approaches to institutional structure and funding. Bruce Brodsky, Oneida County community delegate, promoted the idea of forming an authority as a more efficient method of managing and financing the cost of repairs compared to the individual communities shouldering the financial weight of their system improvements. He noted that this approach would require communities to turn over the ownership of their systems. As a result, extensive communication would be required to help communities understand the huge costs associated with meeting the terms of the Consent Order and the urgency of making necessary repairs.

A question was raised on how an authority would be formed. Mr. Brodsky explained that changing state regulations may make it more difficult than previously to form an authority.

The group also reviewed previous suggestions for enhancing the current function of the Sewer District, which would allow municipalities to receive services through the OCSD.

The discussion then turned to how Oneida County and the municipalities will budget for and fund system repairs.

Mr. Brodsky suggested that Commissioner Devan look at the major repairs needed at the plant in the near future and factor that into his budget in addition to consent order required sewer repairs. He compared this to the Water Authority's practice of listing maintenance and repair projects in order of importance, which in turn helped support bonding efforts with a long-term view.

The idea of building a fund by adding an additional sewer fee to each water/sewer bill was discussed. Questions arose over who should be charged and how much, whether homeowners and businesses should be charged differently, and whether a flat rate or a variable rate structure would be best. Several members of the group commented that the district would be in a much stronger position with the DEC if it had some money committed for the project. For this reason, the Steering Committee recommended by majority vote that Commissioner Devan develop some sort of sinking fund by which the District collects money devoted to fixing the sewer problems. The point was made by Sal Granato, Town of Whitestown designee, that the money could be used at the very least to fix District sewers because all the member communities own are responsible for District sewers. Others suggested the funds be used to pay the debt service on bonds that would cover more significant repair and improvement costs.

Mr. Sorrell noted that he views structure and funding as so closely tied together, they cannot be discussed separately. The group also concurred that without resolving structure and funding questions, very little else can transpire even after the scope of the problem is defined and a solution is decided upon.

Public Information

Nancy Pattarini of Paige Group stressed that public dialogue is crucial to the development of any proposed institutional structure. Ms. Pattarini also pointed out that it will be important to show the differences in costs and efficiencies among various alternatives.

Mr. Brodsky also brought up the idea of using citizen advocates to help advance the structure decision process, as well as having a few people in the political realm take up the cause. He compared this to the formation of the Mohawk Valley Water Authority and local citizens who actively advocated the authority's creation.

Smoke Testing

Mr. Schrantz updated the committee that smoke testing and televising would be starting in the next week and that these activities would be supported through a variety of communications. This will include media announcements of testing dates and locations, which will double as a public educational opportunity. Paige Group will be arranging media coverage of the testing. There will also be mailings to residents in the test areas and Mr. Schrantz stated that crews were also going to be present to answer resident questions.

General Information

Mr. Cleveland reminded the committee that members should be working with the Sewer District and engineering consulting team to identify sewer problem areas in their individual communities. It was specifically requested that communities coordinate

planned sewer system evaluations and repairs/improvements with the county so that information is shared and duplication of effort is avoided. He also mentioned a CMOM self-assessment checklist which will be made available online. The checklist will give municipalities a better idea of what CMOM is about and how it works.

The next working group meeting is scheduled for July 24. The next Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 30th at 5:30 pm at the New York Mills main municipal building.