

**Oneida County Permit Compliance and Sewer Abatement Project
Steering Committee Meeting Report
September 4, 2008
5:30 p.m.
Yorkville Fire and Hose Company**

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>	In process of soliciting a delegate	
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	
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	
The Village of New Hartford		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Donald J. Ryan Don Bathke	X X
	John Grygiel	
<i>Community Delegate</i>		
The Village of New York Mills		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Robert Maciol Joseph Urban	X
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Michael Bailey	
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	X
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Jim Hogel	X
Town of Schuyler		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Kenneth Dodge	
<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 Charles Tritten	X
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Joe Lazenby	
The Town of Whitestown		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Charles R. Gibbs II Sal Granato	
<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 Attorney</i>	Peter Rayhill	X
Oneida County Commissioner - Water Quality and Water Pollution Control		
	Steve Devan	X
Project Consulting Team		
Shumaker Engineering	Karl Schrantz	X
Shumaker Engineering	Jim Luz	X
Paige Group	Nancy Pattarini	X
Paige Group	Richard Barrett	X
Fiscal Advisors	Mark Colopy	X
Guests in Attendance:		
League of Women Voters	Joanna Albrecht	
League of Women Voters	Barbara Weaver	
League of Women Voters	Mary Anthony	

Meeting Highlights/Recap

- October meeting will feature a presentation of flow metering data collected by engineering consultants during the past six months
- The legal work group will be expanded to include a government/regulatory affairs component
- There is a need for a champion on the federal level to advance the cause for funding water and wastewater infrastructure mandates imposed by regulatory agencies
- There is a need for collaboration among other states, counties, cities, towns and villages that are experiencing similar storm water issues to develop solutions and introduce legislation that provides appropriate funding
- Coordination is needed with other public authorities and agencies during their capital projects to work simultaneously and collaboratively as a way of minimizing repair costs and increasing efficiencies
- Utilize media to advocate for consistency and fairness in punitive actions against violators

Project update

Sewer District Commissioner Steve Devan reported that proposed changes to the district's Sewer Use Ordinance have been approved by the County Board of Legislators. A revised document reflecting those changes is being prepared and will be distributed to member municipalities.

The amendments to the original treatment plan capacity study previously submitted as part of the Consent Order have been accepted by DEC.

Engineering fieldwork, including manhole inspections and data gathering, continues. As a result of these ongoing efforts, the consultants are in the process of identifying additional repair projects that could be undertaken that will allow communities to reduce I/I sources and begin accumulating flow credits that will facilitate future development.

There is the possibility of conducting additional monitoring in the future, but presently the quality of the collected data indicates it may not be necessary to continue, other than to track differences before and after repairs or to define an identified problem more clearly.

Flow metering data is being compiled, which the project consulting team will share with municipal representatives in one-on-one briefings so they have some idea of the magnitude of the situation in their community and can participate in the sharing of that information with residents and officials.

Project briefing with legislators

The committee was given a recap of a recent project briefing held with elected officials, which included Senator Griffo, Assemblywoman Destito, Congressman Arcuri and Assemblyman Townsend.

The project consulting team:

- Presented an overview of the issue
- Explained the extent of the problem
- Provided relevant project background
- Gave an update on progress to date
- Highlighted the district's compliance with Consent Order mandates
- Acknowledged the county and district's environmental responsibility
- Emphasized the need for funding assistance due to project costs and for public education so residents clearly understand the gravity and extent of problems.

Officials indicated they would make contact with the appropriate regulatory agencies to look into what are considered unfunded mandates and to question the reality and fairness of requiring communities that have no access to funds to pay for costly repairs.

Devan reiterated the county needs money and time to meet Consent Order requirements and make necessary repairs. He is calling on elected officials to assist in whatever way they can in those efforts and for residents to maintain pressure on them. While legislators are sympathetic and supportive, they are also realistic about the limited availability of funding.

Make funding for wastewater infrastructure improvements an equal priority

It was made clear by several committee members that funding for water and wastewater infrastructure improvements should be considered as high a priority as funding for other infrastructure, such as highways, transportation, telecommunications and utilities. A recommendation was made to explore the availability of federal funding through New York State Senators Schumer and Clinton because of their influence and access to considerably more funding sources.

Engage other affected communities in the process

A suggestion was made to engage other communities that have experienced the same situation already to get their thoughts, ideas and suggestions -- and possibly collaborate on developing solutions. A champion for the cause who has considerable political clout is desperately needed at the federal level.

Need for additional time and money

Field inspections and flow data collected to date show that the problem of excess clean water in the sanitary system is not localized, but is in fact district-wide. This requires a wider area to study, which translates to a need for both extra time and money. It is anticipated that the data will help identify differences between inflow and infiltration, as well as private property contributions of excess I/I and where engineers should be looking. This is significant from a time, cost and project scope standpoint.

Estimated private property evaluations

Devan provided a rough estimate, based on reasonably current water board records, of the number of potential private property evaluations that would have to be conducted in order to gain an appreciation for the scope of the I/I problem as it relates to individual homeowners and businesses. That estimate is approximately 13,000 parcels.

New business

Funding sources and options

The consulting team's fiscal advisor led a discussion on the availability of funding sources. The advisor explained that special programs that utilize state and federal funding do exist, but are few and far between. The probability of funding for a project of this scope is limited, due to the undecided presidency, the current global financial crisis, and a financially strapped state and county, all of which indicates that a commitment to provide assistance should not be expected.

Because billions of dollars will be required to adequately fund wastewater infrastructure improvements and no money is available, there is a heightened need to explore options at the local level. Recommendations made through the funding work group included tax incentives or surcharges that would be set aside to fund future repairs.

Using a combination of local funding sources, along with federal money through the support of Sens. Schumer and Clinton's office, was recommended. A significant piece of the funding undoubtedly will require a large local share. Another piece will result from the state comptroller's forthcoming opinion on the use of public (state) funds for private property repairs.

But committee members believe that even with state or federal funding, there is still the need for the public's buy-in and support by offering incentives, such as spreading repair and improvement costs over an extended period of time or applying special assessments on sewer bills. The possibility of creating a superfund to address what is now considered a serious national problem -- similar to the toxic waste environmental catastrophe 30 years ago -- was also mentioned as a possible alternative.

Buying time can increase costs

There was additional discussion on the possibility of extending the project deadline from 2014 to 2020, which would allow the county to buy additional time for evaluating, planning and funding system repairs. However, the down sides to a project extension involve inflationary issues and the rising costs of labor and materials. It was noted that good system design methods and materials selection can have a major impact on controlling construction costs.

The fiscal advisor indicated that it is not too early to begin the process of approaching representatives to raise their awareness of the challenges involved and to begin developing funding options.

Next meeting: 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 23, at Yorkville Fire and Hose Company, second floor meeting room

