**Committee of the Whole Meeting- July 14, 2025**

Attendees: Council President King; Council Members Baltzell, Buxton, Clausen, Fleck, Gray, Sanford, and Wolfe; Wastewater Treatment Plant Superintendent Kerry Duncan; Sophia Rodriguez; Bill Kincaid

President King called the Committee of the Whole Meeting to order at 6:00 pm to discuss the Wastewater Treatment Plant project NFA (No Feasible Alternative).

Kerry Duncan discussed that Council has met a couple times regarding the No Feasible Alternative to bypassing. The NFA was submitted by the deadline and the Ohio EPA asked for more information. Jones & Henry and the City felt it was best to ask for a 90-day extension to allow time to bring all aspects to Council. The 90-day extension was approved and this part of the project is 30% of the total design phase that is due by August 1, 2025. Kerry has seen them do it both ways, where they just have one engineering cover everything. He believes Jones & Henry’s intent was to get approval for the preliminary design to get the ball rolling because there are some pretty aggressive deadlines. Jones & Henry’s purpose of saying let’s get into a preliminary engineering is to cover what needs to get presented to the Ohio EPA and then the remaining will be coming at a later date. This is roughly 30% estimate of the total engineering which is $377,300 and includes the topo survey. After discussing the NFA options and recommendations it is kind of a threefold approach. We are looking at replacing existing equipment as dated. We are looking at adding a process and equipment to increase capacity and then collectively that would reduce. You have to be careful eliminating because no one can predict the monstrous rains we may get but it should reduce the bypass events and that is really all the Ohio EPA is wanting. They are not telling the City to increase capacity for economic development, or to change existing equipment. They are telling the City to look at alternatives to reduce bypasses and collectively we have come up with an approach to handle everything.

CM Fleck stated it says to identify the 100-500-year flood program it doesn’t say to eliminate it. Is it basically encroachment into a 100-year floodplain?

Kerry Duncan answered that is correct. I don't know about the two new clarifiers but the third oxidation ditch would sit in the floodplain which Jones & Henry then will be responsible for Army Corps engineering approval. There might be some tradeoffs there I don't know how they will work that out but some of that process would set in the floodplain which would need approval and they are aware of it.

CM Clausen stated I know they talked about not trying to break up this implementation and trying to keep it one package. It is such a staggering number, is there a way to come up with a figure per household for how we are billing today to kind of let the public know what that means? It is a big ticket and hard to break it down. Are we going to get any grants? Are we going to have to finance? What does that finance look like? I know a lot of that can play into it but just assume we don’t get anything. Do you have an idea of what that cost impact is going to be per house?

Kerry Duncan answered that will be coming probably in the next phase of engineering. Jones & Henry will be assisting the City with our current sewer rates. Some may remember when the City very aggressively rose sewer rates over a twice a year for five years but it has been a long time. Jones & Henry will look at how the City wants to finance this over 20 years, 25 years, or 30 years and that will be based on the affordability for our customers.

CM Clausen asked how it would be broken down? Per house? Per business?

Kerry Duncan answered it would be coinciding with existing rates. Now you pay more if you are outside the city limits and less if you are inside. Larger volume customers get reduced rates because of the volume.

CM Clausen suggested it would be good to have a break down to let the public know based on how much water they are using annually roughly what it will cost. Our goal here is to make sure we get the permit renewed.

Kerry Duncan stated if the City doesn’t move forward this is a pollutant discharge elimination. It is a required permit. If the City would choose to not continue there would be fines from the regulatory agency. It is never a good idea to get in that situation because you can add a lot of cost quick.

CM Clausen stated after a couple of dry years you are thinking the risk is getting pretty low but we all know that can change and the next year we could have multiple.

Kerry Duncan stated southern parts of Ohio are receiving 11-12 inches of rain right now but that is not the case here right now. We just never know what the weather patterns are going to be.

CM Wolfe asked Kerry if he remembered what the plant cost back when they did the upgrade to the existing plant that we have now?

Kerry Duncan answered under 7 million, 6.8 million.

CM Wolfe asked if the City got that paid for? Kerry Duncan answered correct.

CM Wolfe stated the City has no debt on that. 30 years ago the City acquired a 7-million-dollar debt and was able to pay it off by charging everybody a surcharge on their utility bills.

CM Clausen asked if it was a surcharge or a charge per? CM Wolfe stated he believed it was a charge on the utility bill.

Kerry Duncan stated he thinks it was strictly paid and the confusion might be with water. Water was a surcharge and wastewater was basically paid for by rate structure.

CM Wolfe stated that amount was able to be paid off in that amount of time. Now with inflation and everything else we are looking at $34 million which is probably not out of line with the cost of everything that has gone up. I think it is one of those things we are just going to have to do it. I hate to see anybody’s utility bill go up but we have to think about economic development in the future. We also have to think about being within the NPDs permit guidelines. I think this Ordinance tonight is just the starting point and we go from there.

CM Fleck stated he thought the Mayor was talking about making reference to 30-year payback so over that 30 years you could slowly step the read up not just all at once.

Kerry Duncan stated Jones & Henry does this daily and are well familiar with the necessary rate structures for the community, for the customers. If we didn’t worry about the capacity increase and take it out of the equation, we are still spending millions of dollars to make improvements to the existing equipment and we would still have to spend millions of dollars for the storm flow EQ to satisfy the Ohio EPA’s bypasses. We are adding additional costs with the capacity expansion but it is a nice economic development tool to bring in revenue. There is a lot of revenue of the industrial base and we don’t have a lot of capacity to provide future customers. I am not talking about existing future.

CM Baltzell stated looking through the list the three prong approach makes perfect sense to him. If we did have to separate how that relates to the bypasses seems to be a significant chunk of the total cost. He asked if we would need a third oxidation ditch?

Kerry Duncan answered if we did it entirely, remember the NFA, there was a cost basis for stormflow EQ as an option and it was $23 million. That would just be to satisfy bypasses, that gives no capacity increases, no equipment replacement and existing equipment. If we scrutinized it and did what we felt was in the best interest for customer.

CM Baltzell stated that is 2/3 of the cost already just to address that it makes sense to make this investment and prepare for the expansion and replace equipment that is 30 plus years old.

Kerry Duncan stated his main concern is operating the equipment, operating the plant, and making sure he can adequately treat the sewage that comes in to get it out to the Beaver. We don’t have a standby pump and a standby pump; we rotate our equipment equally. All three of our screw pumps rated at 7.5 million gallons a piece could all fail within a short period of time because they have the same amount of hours on them. We have pulled the screws out and recoded them and we have changed some lower bearings but the drives and the flights are all originals. We do the best we can do on preventive maintenance but we are probably on borrowed time.

CM Buxton stated if we don’t replace everything all at once it will probably be cheaper now than five years from now.

CM Baltzell stated it is always cheaper now never gets cheaper.

CM Fleck asked Kerry if he operates the pumps on a redundant basis and can you run multiple pumps?

Kerry Duncan answered we rotate them out. All three of our pumps are utilized during high flow events. They are staggered to come on at different levels. We rotate our lead pump out every month and switch so we keep the same amount of hours on each pump. We rotate all of our equipment: pumps, blowers, aerators, evenly.

CM Wolfe brought up about issues prior to putting in a generator at the plant. We had a power outage and the screw pumps wouldn’t work. He asked Kerry Duncan to explain what happens.

Kerry Duncan explained the collection system is a series of pump stations. The farther you get out, network outside the gravity lines you have to lift the sewage and then pump it to a gravity sewer. Eventually it is all gravity sewers coming into the plant. Without the power if you are not pumping, the collection system just backs up, starts low, and then we will bypass at the Beaver Creek. You will also have (SSO) sanitary sewer overflows in the collection system. You have to keep those pumps or it is impaired. We will do some service during low flow and you can be down for a short period of time but not during the high flow advances.

CM Wolfe explained about a power outage where the screw pumps went down and all the lift stations were running. We had manholes on Myers Road getting blown out of the castings and getting overflow into Myers Road which goes directly into the storm sewer system. It has happened before where we have had issues so it is important to make sure that these screw pumps are going because we are going to get a bypass at the Beaver. If they go down, we are going to have a bypass at multiple watersheds.

CM Baltzell asked if a new design would have redundant pumps?

Kerry Duncan answered we have inclined screw pumps now there is three of them. Back in the day when we had a lot of wear and tear on the flights two of the three could handle the peak flow. We now have VFD controls so we can bring them in and we actually are utilizing all three. Those inclined screw pumps are looking to be replaced with submersible pumps with redundancy staged and probably more redundancy than what we have now with the inclined screw pumps.

CM Clausen asked how many other communities are working through this? Is it a big number? Has the EPA reaction pretty much been to say no more?

Kerry Duncan answered it is common throughout the state of Ohio. They separate you based on a combined sewer system or a non-combined and population. Ohio EPA went after the Columbus areas, Cincinnati areas and the Toledo areas first. Now they are into the Celina, Ohio areas and less so the smaller villages and less population. We are big enough and rated enough that we as well as many other communities our size are being regulated with it.

CM Fleck asked when you put the VFDs on did that keep the breakage from coming on full force or how many horse are the pumps?

Kerry Duncan answered those are pretty big, like 40 horse. We did VFDs for a couple of reasons the energy consumption with the soft start is a very significant savings over a year’s time. We are prone to freezing temperatures and what was discovered is when our third pump was needed at times during like a snow melt for example, our pump was frozen. We are running those screw pumps on hand to prevent that from happening and we are wasting energy. The VFD we now can run at 20 hertz instead of 60 hertz in the wintertime that is another savings there. So the VFD is kind of serve several.

CM Clausen asked if they are belt driven?

Kerry Duncan answered yes they are, there is a big atlas and the VFDs came later they were not originals we added them.

CM Clausen asked if the smoke test did any help?

Kerry Duncan answered we did find some breaks and dew down. We fixed a few things and are still in the process of some downspouts that we are going to be looking into. We were hoping to find a lot of low hanging fruit, which we did not.

CM Clausen asked why do you think that is? It was probably a good guess based on the age of the City and you probably thought things were tied together.

Kerry Duncan answered we were hoping to eliminate a lot of clean water from coming in by finding those obvious connections. We have a few we have already addressed and we have some more that we are going to address but it wasn’t an overwhelming amount.

CM Clausen stated there is some things you have on your list to work on but at an opportune time.

Kerry Duncan explained there are 16 manholes identified that we feel are in flood prone areas during excessive events. We are going to seal them up, those are examples that we are going to move forward with doing and it is just not going to be your saving grace of fixing the problem.

CM Buxton asked if those manholes are already marked?

Kerry Duncan answered yes those are in the GPS system. We have already put some bladders to seal out on many we have done years ago. It is not like we identified a manhole that was two feet underwater and never did anything about it. We raised them up with castings. We had some on West Bank that were 2-3 feet underwater and we brought them up above out of the high flooding. We have even added some bladders to flooded areas, flooded streets.

CM Wolfe explained the bladders are a round kind of a bowl that seals in between the manhole casting and the manhole itself. Because most of our lids are vented and that's where you get your infiltration around the lid. Each one of the bladders that were put in the bottom of it would have a pressure valve in it that once you get so much water in it, if it was over then it would seal them valves off and stop the water from flowing in it. Then when pressure would subside then it would drain them out so you didn't have them freezing in the wintertime. Even your manholes in them seem to work pretty good.

CM Clausen asked if any of these big street projects, like Mill Street, have revealed anything that should be looked into as we do street projects to help offset?

Kerry Duncan answered we have lined some sewers and probably replaced some. They will clean and camera every sewer before we go in and a lot of them have been in pretty decent shape but we have some that had to either slip line or replace or repair.

CM Wolfe stated we would run a camera during a decent rain event where we fill our lines up and we could go under the manhole with the camera and kind of observe the joints and see if we had an infiltration coming in. We never really found a whole lot, in some of your shallower systems we would find some infiltration on that. But a lot of your like Mill Street are very deep. It is like 16-18 feet deep down and we never had a lot of infiltration through.

President King asked if there were any questions in regards to tonight’s Ordinance?

CM Clausen asked if before the final reading if we could get some type of cost estimate for what it means for businesses and homeowners.

CM Baltzell stated that is part of the study, they are going to have to do some calculations to give you that. It seems like this is urgent, it is an emergency and we need to get the preliminary design rolling.

Kerry Duncan reminded Council that we already had a 90-day extension from the Ohio EPA and have an August 1st deadline. This is just preliminary and I don’t believe that is part of the preliminary it will be coming at a later stage.

CM Wolfe stated this is just going to get us where we need to be with our permit and down the road I we can critique if needed. We need to get this Ordinance passed tonight to meet the August 1st deadline and I think we need to show responsibility to get that done.

Kerry Duncan explained this may be a better question for Jones & Henry but they had part of this preliminary engineering proposal. They have to do an anti-degradation submit that to the Ohio EPA. That has to be done before they submit the funding in August. I think that is part of why they decided to do preliminary so they can move forward with that and make those deadlines. The water pollution control funding is a deadline there is a deadline once a year. If you don't meet the August deadline, then you are waiting until the next August. They wanted to push through this so that they could submit in time.

CM Fleck stated it does say after the preliminary they would discuss development for the funding and funding sources that will help us out.

Kerry Duncan explained from the size of our community and there is no wastewater debt I am guessing we are going to look at a water pollution control loan would be the most logical. I'm not saying there could be some grants that come in and help or assist. But I would guess that the majority of our funding will be from like the Ohio EPA Water Pollution Control Fund is common.

CM Buxton asked if the schedule in the attachment to the Ordinance will be changing?

After discussion amongst several Council Members and Kerry Duncan it was decided that the last 4 years on the schedule should be 2026 not 2025.

CM Clausen asked if there will be an adjustment to the load allowed by the plant to dispense into the Beaver?

Kerry Duncan answered there will be a loading adjustment. Anytime you increase your plant rating the loads have to come down. The reason the loading will stay the same our concentrations have to come down. The load remains the same and that is the whole purpose of it. You are allowed X amount of pounds of pollution per parameter and if you want to increase your flow, then they will decrease your concentration. I think what you are referring to is Jones & Henry wasn't positive that Ohio EPA would like to require tertiary treatment membrane filtration. We don't think so, but we don't know. That is what he just said I want everybody to be aware that there could be a tertiary treatment factor that is not part of this calculated number.

President King adjourned the meeting at 6:36 pm

Submitted by Kari R. Fox, Clerk of Council