**Utility Committee Meeting – April 14, 2025**

Utilities Meeting Summary:

Attendees: Council President King; Council Members Baltzell, Buxton, Clausen, Fleck, Gray, Sanford, and Wolfe; Mayor Hazel; Safety Service Director Hitchcock

Start Time: CM Baltzell called the Utility Meeting to order at 6:30 PM

Main Topic(s) Discussed: Wastewater EPA Compliance

1. **Introduction**

* **Participants:**
  + City officials and committee members.
  + Representatives from Jones and Henry Engineers: Peter Latta and Troy Brehmer as well as Wastewater Superintendent spoke about the following:
* **Purpose:**  
  Presentation of the study conducted by Jones and Henry Engineers on eliminating bypasses required by Ohio EPA.

2. **EPA Requirements and Compliance**

* **Ohio EPA Mandate:**  
  The city is required to explore alternatives to eliminate bypasses in the wastewater treatment plant, an issue persisting for decades.
* **National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit:**
  + The permit necessitates the elimination of bypasses unless a No Feasible Alternative (NFA) report is submitted.
  + **Report Submission:**  
    Submitted to the EPA in April, indicating that feasible alternatives exist despite the associated costs.
  + **Compliance Schedule:**  
    Original deadline set for construction completion by 2026. An extension was requested and is under EPA review.

3. **Wastewater Plant Overview**

* **Historical Context:**
  + Plant originally constructed 85 years ago with major expansions in 1962 and 1991.
  + Capacity increased from 2.5 MGD to 3 MGD in 2007.
* **Current Capacity Limitations:**
  + Overflows occur during wet weather events, leading to untreated wastewater discharge into the creek.

4. **Bypass Issues**

* **Bypass Events:**
  + Approximately 42 bypasses recorded from 2018 to 2023.
  + Largest average bypass volume: 7.7 million gallons over seven years.
* **Hydraulic Limitations:**
  + Current plant hydraulics allow 12-15 MGD through the treatment process.
  + Necessary improvements to handle up to 22 MGD.

5. **Technical Recommendations for Bypass Elimination**

* **Treatment Plant Expansion:**
  + Replace aged screw pumps from 1991 with new submersible pump stations.
  + Add a third mechanical screen and gas protection systems.
  + Upgrade aerated grit and grease removal systems.
  + Supplement oxidation ditches and clarify with two new clarifiers.
  + Replace ultraviolet disinfection systems.
  + **Estimated Cost:** ~$32 million.
* **Storage Solutions:**
  + Proposed storage improvements estimated at $21 million.
  + Not recommended due to lack of capacity increase and inability to address aging infrastructure.
* **Inflow and Infiltration Reduction:**
  + Smoke testing identified direct connections.
  + CCTV inspections revealed problematic pipes requiring repair.
  + **Estimated Cost:** ~$1.9 billion.

6. **Funding and Project Schedule**

* **Funding Options:**
  + **WPCLF Funding:**
    - Preferred due to favorable terms (0% interest loans).
    - Competitive and needs to be nominated by August.
  + **Other Funding Avenues:**
    - USDA, OWDA (market rate loans), and other grants.
* **Project Timeline:**
  + Preliminary Design by end of the current year.
  + Final Design and Construction Documents preparation following preliminary design.
  + Aim for Construction Permit to Install (PTI) post 60-90% document completion.
  + Target Construction Start: Prior to 2026 deadline.

7. **Operational Concerns**

* **Equipment Aging:**
  + Last major updates in 1991.
  + Increased maintenance and operational issues due to aging infrastructure.
* **Administrative Facility:**
  + Current administration building deteriorating.
  + Proposal to replace with a new building to reduce noise and improve functionality.

8. **Community and Environmental Impact**

* **Infiltration Issues:**
  + Uniform distribution across the collection system.
  + Efforts to seal problematic chimneys and elevated manholes.
* **EPA Stream Water Quality:**
  + EPA’s directive based on stream pollutant sources and water quality assessments.

Discussion after presentation:

1. CM Wolfe spoke about the smoke tests and asked if there was a lift station that was worse than another lift station and Kerry Duncan spoke about the smoke test and noted there was no lift station clearly better than the other and Peter Latta confirmed during the study they also tried to find the pattern but none existed and it was spread apart. Kerry also mentioned that they have raised manholes and done others things to try to help the bypasses from happening.
2. CM Baltzell noted this is a lot of information to take in spoke about the permits to start in 2026 and Peter mentioned they have submitted a proposal to take the NFA and get a preliminary design to define the project in much greater detail which is required by the EPA and would submit for EPA funding which would help with the timeline. Peter spoke about the project being mapped out by the end of the year and the process required by the EPA. CM Baltzell asked about funding and Peter confirmed there are many different funding sources but the most favorable is the WPCLF because you can get a 0% interest loan or less than market value and noted orders from the EPA do help you get this loan.
3. Mayor Hazel spoke about administrations interest in keeping it a 30-year loan.
4. CM Fleck asked if there would be any bypass after the projected project and Peter confirmed that EPA order is to eliminate it and they believe that is what this project would do. CM Fleck noted that we can have a very serious flood and Peter confirmed that is possible and we will not know if it is entirely successful until after.
5. CM Clausen asked about the EPA asking for a 0% bypass and finds it unreasonable for the government to come into a small city like this and demand they spend 32 million dollars on a project to avoid bypass at the Wastewater plant that they did not know was a major problem. CM Clausen asked what made the EPA make this decision and understands we had the smoke test but to ask for this to be done immediately with this price tag and Peter noted that it has to do with the water quality and the pollution and that it is public record and it is based on the permit from the EPA to demand the removal. Kerry Duncan confirmed the City of Celina is not the only City being forced into this and Peter confirmed they have been looking and tracking it for quite a while.

Follow-up

* **Project Progress Review:**
  + Schedule meetings to monitor funding applications and design phase progress.
* **EPA Communication:**
  + Await EPA feedback on the NFA extension request.
* **Community Updates:**
  + Provide regular updates to the community on project milestones and impacts.

CM Baltzell adjourned the meeting at 7:01 pm

Submitted by Michael F. Didonato, Clerk of Council