

Q1. Is the Authority considered a "municipality" on its own?

Answer:

For most purposes, yes, however, it has no taxing powers nor ordinance powers, therefore, it is more applicable to deem the Authority as an "agent" for other municipalities.

Q2. Does the Authority provide both public sewer and water?

Answer:

At this time (2010) the Authority provides only public sewer service to its customers within the municipalities it services. Under its incorporation, it is able to provide water service if requested by the municipalities.

Q3. How does the Authority finance its operations?

Answer:

The Authority operates as an enterprise fund, with annual revenue and expense budgets with retained earnings. As a public sewer enterprise fund, we have two sources of revenue, monthly (quarterly) User Service Charges, and new construction Capital Charges levied on new homes, businesses, etc. who are charged a Connection Fee or an Assessment. Capital Charges in the form of Assessments levied by a municipality for a specific public improvement are restricted to pay the costs incurred for new sewer construction projects. Connection Fees, charged in lieu of (or on top of) Assessments, may be restricted for debt payments or may also (sometimes) be used as a reserve fund for other sewer related construction and repair necessitated by growth of the system (to maintain the ability to provide service to new areas).

For budgetary and audited financial statements, click here:

Q4. Is the Authority audited?

Answer:

The Authority is audited annually by independent auditors and the audit is submitted to the state as required by all municipalities. Our budgets and annual audited financial statements are posted on our website.

For budgetary and audited financial statements, click here:

Q5. Where is the treatment plant for treating wastewater?

Answer:

The Authority and Townships participated in the 1980 Federal Grants program where the City of Kalamazoo received significant grant funds to construct a regional treatment facility. Each of the municipalities of the Authority and the Authority contracted with the City for wastewater treatment. The Authority is charged a fee for treatment based on total gallons treated per month. All wastewater collected by the Authority is pumped (or flows by gravity) to the City of Kalamazoo.

For a copy of the Authority/City of Kalamazoo Contract, click here:

Q6. How are new sewer projects initiated?

Answer:

There are two primary types of projects: Public and Private

Public projects are typically initiated by a citizen or group of citizens who desire public sewer service. They inquire at the Township, Village or Authority. The Authority directs its engineer to research and make recommendations, including a cost estimate of the project (preliminary feasibility study). The Authority reviews the project feasibility and scope, plus proposes an "allocation" method for assessing (charging) the benefited properties (recovering capital cost of the project). The Authority reports back to the citizen group and if the citizens continue to be interested, the Authority provides an update to the Township Board or Village Council followed by a mailed informal survey and/or an informational meeting. If after the survey or meeting, there continues to be general support, a formal petition is usually prepared by the Authority to be circulated by the citizen group. If sufficient petition support exists, the

Authority presents the petition results to the municipality, then if supported by the municipality, formal hearings are held and the project is designed, permitted by MDEQ and other relevant agencies, bids are taken, then the project is constructed and placed in service. The above process may take up to two years or more, depending on complexity.

Private projects occur when a developer, once he/she has secured appropriate zoning and clearance from the respective municipality, submits engineering designs for public sewer extension to and/or through the development. Our engineer will review and make adjustments, the Authority will review and assist with financing where appropriate (if serving more area than just the development), and then the project is designed, permitted by MDEQ and other relevant agencies, and then constructed. The above process usually takes 6 months or more, dependent on size and financing issues.

Other projects of minor nature may or may not follow all of the above steps.

Q7. How does a public "petition process" work? (similar question as above)

Answer:

Typically, a few residents, or an association, develop an interest in a public improvement, in our case, public sewer. The Township or Village directs inquiries to its agent, the Authority. The Authority Board authorizes its engineer to put together cost estimates and maps to a degree sufficient to determine the project variables, options and cost ("preliminary feasibility study"). Then the Authority works with those in favor of the project to complete the planning phase of the potential project. A public informational meeting is held and/or an advisory survey is sent out. Following the informational meeting, if citizens are interested in moving forward, the Authority prepares a 'legal' petition, with boundary description, estimates of costs and payment options. Citizens carry the petition from door-to-door and once > 50% of the land area is certified in favor of the project by petition, the Authority presents it to the Township Board, who then hold one or two public hearings. For the two-hearing process, the first hearing is on the necessity, district boundary, and the estimate of cost. Once approved by the Township Board, the second hearing is held on the assessment roll for the project. Once approved, the detailed design engineering is completed and the project let out for bid. There are several variations of this process at the Township level, and also, Village regulations may differ from the Township process outlined above.

Q8. Is there a vote on the formal petition?

Answer:

No, not for the public process. The petition is worded to be in favor of the project under the terms and conditions set forth on the petition or as finally established by the municipality.. If >50% of the land area is not in favor of the project, the project usually is not constructed (there are exceptions to this dependent upon circumstance, but not common practice).

Q9. Is a 'negative' petition prepared for those that may oppose the project?

Answer:

No, not for the public process. The petition is worded to be in favor of the project under the terms and conditions set forth on the petition or as finally established by the municipality.. If >50% of the land area is not in favor of the project, the project usually is not constructed (there are exceptions to this dependent upon circumstance, but not common practice).

Q10. Is a 'negative' petition prepared for those that may oppose the project?

Answer:

No, not by the Authority or municipality. The municipality typically only views and considers those signatures (property owners) in favor of the project in the formal petition process.

Q11. Can a municipality move forward on its own and construct the project without public support?

Answer:

Yes, most municipalities can act to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public; however, projects usually have moderate public support prior to implementation.

Q12. Is the municipality able to modify the project to include only those in favor of the project?

Answer:

Basically yes, if such modification is technically feasible and can accomplish the project without excessive modification. In other words, a street or sub-division can be "dropped" from a proposed project if the opposition from that sector is problematic, providing the pipeline(s) servicing the remaining district are not compromised and all customers are paying an equitable portion of the project cost (as determined by the municipality).

Q13. What public agencies are usually involved in a sewer project?

Answer:

The Authority contracts with the local Township and/or Village as agent for the Township or Village. The contract spells out the terms of the project, and after the financing details are implemented, the Health Department, Road Commission, MDOT and the MDEQ are involved to some degree. Also, state permits for stream crossings or for work adjacent to waterways and lakes are required, as are Soil Erosion permits with the County. Initially, the municipality and the Authority jointly create the project alternatives and present them to the public for public input, then make their decisions as to what is to be constructed. All permits must be obtained during design prior to construction.

For a sample of an Authority – Municipal contract for sewer construction, click here:

Q14. Can the Authority initiate a (major) project on its own without municipal approval?

Answer:

No, the Authority is the agent for the municipality and although it has financing and condemnation powers of its own, it typically would not be able to construct public sewer without express authorization via contract with the respective municipality(s) for the specific project desired. The Authority typically enters into a "financial + operational contract" with the municipality prior to any construction.

For a sample of an Authority – Municipal contract for sewer construction, click here:

Q15. What is a Conventional Gravity Sewer? What are pump stations?

Answer:

A Conventional Gravity Sewer system is a system of pipes and main-line pump stations that are installed at-grade, allowing most homes to connect their existing plumbing by gravity out to the street. Main-line pump stations are constructed where depth of sewer or terrain challenges prevent gravity from being installed and then, force mains or pressure mains carry pumped wastewater up and over the obstacles and terrain to a point where the wastewater is again discharged into a gravity collector sewer

Q16. Is it mandatory that all construction projects be bid and awarded to the lowest bidder?

Answer:

No, bidding on the construction project is not mandatory but is common practice. Award to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder is also common practice.

Q17. Who is on the Board of Directors?

Answer:

Each of the four charter member townships (called "constituent" municipalities) are to appoint one of their elected officials to sit on the Authority Board of Commissioners (Directors). There are four Commissioners. Typically the chief elected official (Township Supervisor) is the appointee; however, each appointee sits at the pleasure of his/her respective Township Board.

For information on the current Board of Directors, click here:

Q18. What is a Pressure Sewer? Grinder pump?

Answer:

As compared to Conventional Gravity, a Pressure Sewer allows homes to connect via pumping from a collection point on their private property (fiberglass basin 2 foot diameter x 5 or 6 feet deep) into a pressure main installed in the street. For example, a grinder pump system can be installed at each home and every 35 gallons +/-, the pump is activated, pumping through a 1 ¼ inch pipe across the property and connecting to the "low pressure" main in the street. The Authority's systems are primarily gravity sewers with the exception of Sherman Lake (140 homes) and the 5- mile long pressure main along 37th street to Galesburg, where grinder pumps are utilized

Q19. What are the financing options for Assessments or Connection Fees that are due the Authority?

Answer:

Assessments are levied formally by the local municipality and usually financeable over 15-20 year, with simple interest charged annually at 1% more than the cost of borrowed funds. For connections that occur later (unassessed properties), the Authority charges a Connection Fee that is typically able to be financed at for 10% down, 9 additional equal annual installments with 7% interest charged annually. This is not always the case, as some projects require multiple layers of coverage that may not allow for a financing option with the local municipality or Authority.

Q20. Is there mandatory connection in the sewer districts?

Answer:

Until 2007, connection was mandatory throughout most of the Gull Lake Districts, except the Village of Richland. After 2008, the Authority and its municipalities have adopted new ordinances that have non-mandatory connection. When septic systems fail, connection must occur

Q21. Am I allowed to pump my septic system without being subject to mandatory connection?

Answer:

Yes. Any excavation work for the septic system (other than pumping), requiring a permit from the Health Department on your on-site septic system will result in your having to connect

Q22. What are the criteria for declaring a septic system failure? (same question as above)

Answer:

If the Health Department needs to issue a construction permit for repair, maintenance or upgrade to the septic system, and public sewer is available within 200 feet, the Health Department will require connection.

Q23. What is the process for obtaining easements across private property?

Answer:

Our engineers attempt to pick the most effective route whenever the public right-of-way is not adequate or appropriate. Typically, the easement is across an area that is prohibited from building construction (set-back area or close to water's edge). In this event, we write the homeowner a letter stating the public improvement is likely to enhance his/her property value and we ask for a donation of the easement to the project. If refused, we are required to make a determination of value and offer the value to the property owner in exchange for the easement. If necessary, the Authority, in conjunction with the Township, may utilize the power of eminent domain (condemnation) to attempt to acquire the easement.

Q24. If I am connected by gravity from the house to the street, who takes care of the building sewer on my property?

Answer:

The building sewer (usually 4" pipe) on private property is the responsibility of the homeowner to maintain, repair or replace.

Q25. If I am responsible for my own gravity building sewer, what is the purpose of the "inspection" and permit to connect?

Answer:

The "inspection" is not a true inspection but rather, a visual verification that the home is connected and all drains are connected. We are prohibited by the State Plumbing code to regulate the excavation and installation of the building sewer as the State has ultimate jurisdiction, and the plumber or contractor that the homeowner has hired is assumed to be competent. The Authority inspector draws a detailed map of the connection which we keep on file for homeowner use as needed. If requested, we will provide locating services on private property as a service to the homeowners, even though the homeowner is ultimately liable for any failures or stoppages on private property. CALL MISS DIG BEFORE YOU DIG. 1-800-482-7171 or 811

Q26. Am I permitted, as a homeowner, to do my own installation of my building sewer?

Answer:

Yes, however, we discourage unqualified homeowners to install their own, as any excavation over 4 feet deep is difficult and dangerous, even with proper equipment. We require proof of insurance and may require a bond of \$2,000 - \$3,000 +/- to ensure the public portion of the sewer is not damaged when the connection is made to the public service lateral.

Q27. What are the qualifications for contractors and plumbers for doing my gravity hook-up?

Answer:

The ordinance provides the Authority, may, by resolution, establish requirements for bond coverage and insurance coverage for all contractors, excavators and/or plumbers performing exterior gravity sewer connections.

Q28. Who owns the grinder pump on my property? (Private property/grinder pump system installation, ownership and service.)

Answer:

When a homeowner elects to connect to a pressure main, the permit application, backed by Township Ordinance, will provide that the Authority, its personnel and contractors are permitted upon the property to install, maintain and replace components of the public system as necessary, allowing for Authority ownership of the system. If a homeowner denies us access for initial installation or future service, the homeowner will become responsible for installation, ownership, maintenance and replacement of the components. Regardless of ownership, the property is subject to the monthly service fee.

Q29. What are known difficulties or problems with gravity sewer hook-ups?

Answer:

Gravity sewer connections are not known to have many deficiencies, unless the installation was improper. Prior to plastic pipe (1975+/-), the clay tiles joints or other pipe products would be subject to tree roots causing plugging over time, as tree roots would find their way into the pipe, then grow rapidly over several years to plug the pipe. Root cutters are used by the crews to clean roots out of pipe when this is encountered.

Since the advent of plastic pipe, rubber couplings and push-on gasketed joints, tree roots are much less of a problem. Pipe settling, low spots or crushed pipe are a few not-so-common problems with installations since 1975.

Q30. What is an assessment?

Answer:

An assessment is the proposed charge to be "specially assessed" against the property. The assessment represents the benefit accruing to the property as a result of the public improvement. The assessment must bear a reasonable proportion to the benefit the property receives from the public sewer. The assessment, once confirmed by the Township Board, becomes a lien on the property. Historically, the Township allows the property owners the option to finance the assessment with the Township over a 15-year period; however, interest is applied on the unpaid

balance at a rate 1% greater than the cost of borrowed funds. The property lien does not have to be paid off upon transfer of title, however, most lenders require pay-off by the purchaser or seller prior to close

Q31. How is the proposed "maximum" cost per home developed?

Answer:

The Township or Village, in any public improvement project, must balance several competing interests. It must first assure itself the risk of financing a project does not place the Township, Village or Authority "general funds" in jeopardy. Secondly, it must assure itself the proposed assessment is commensurate to the increased value accruing to the property. The municipality must review the assessment options and determine, to the best of its ability, what methodology is most equitable, given the district boundaries and other considerations as noted.

The three basic methods of "covering" project costs are placing assessments (i) on existing homes, + (ii) on vacant parcels, and + (iii) calculating future growth in adjacent areas which may someday utilize the system and pay a connection fee in the future. The most common assessment methodologies are (1) charging per benefited unit (home), (2) per front footage, (3) per acre, or (4) any combination of these.

Q32. What are Connection Fees?

Answer:

Connection Fees are NOT what the homeowner pays their contractor to make the connection. Connection Fees are the charge to each home or business desiring connection to the system. When a property is assessed their proportionate share of the project, that property is usually deemed to have paid-in-full, and there are no additional connection fees. Connection Fees, direct or indirect, pay the proportionate share of capacity, trunk sewer, treatment and other costs resultant from Authority operations to provide and maintain sewer capacity for existing customers and new customers.

Q33. In the design of a public sewer, how is the long-term use determined? Is there future capacity for new connections?

Answer:

In any capital improvement project, it is difficult to predict how many users will connect over 50 years or more. In each project, we hope to allow for least a doubling of capacity over the long-term.

Q34. Upon connection to either gravity or pressure, are residents required to discharge all household wastewater into the public sewers, including gray water from laundry washers and brine water from soft water tanks?

Answer:

Yes. All wastewater from the home, including any and all structures emitting wastewater (including garages) is required to leave the premise via the public sewer system. However, Sump Pumps that handle groundwater are not permitted. See the link "Sump Pumps" on our home page at glswa.org.

Q35. Is storm water, eavestrough, or basement drains permitted to connect to the public sewer?

Answer:

No, storm water, basement sumps or run-off of any nature is strictly prohibited. See the link "Sump Pumps" on our home page at glswa.org.

Q36. Miss Dig:

Answer:

Before any excavation occurs on your property, for your protection and safety, call 811 and the system "Miss Dig" will notify all utilities to stake (mark) their utilities on or near your property. Our office will mark the sewer in the street as well as the sewer on your property provided we have a drawing on file. Most sewer connections made after 1990 we have drawings to assist us to mark the utility. The marking of sewer on private property is a courtesy and

will be based on information on file – it carries no guarantee of accuracy nor will the authority be liable if the private property pipe is damaged, regardless of staking efforts.

Q37. What is the monthly rate for service and how is it calculated

Answer:

The Authority has fixed costs and variable costs, and approximately 40% of our costs are fixed, meaning that we have expenses regardless of whether you are using your facilities or not. As 50% of our system customers do not have water service (have no water meters), it has been determined the most equitable method to bill individual customers is to bill "flat rate" per unit, where one unit is a single family home, and is assumed to utilize 200 gal/day on average. The cost in 2009 for a single family home is \$21.67 per month regardless of use. Commercial entities are either (i) metered to determine the average use, divided by 200 gal/day to determine units, then multiply the units by the current rate, or (ii) for unmetered commercial accounts, we calculate the number of "units" the business is worth based on historical data and multiply it times the rate. All customers pay the minimum of 1 unit.

The Charge is calculated by establishing the necessary annual budget to operate the system, then divide the number of Unit Equivalents (homes + business units) into the annual cost to operate the system. This yields the annual cost per unit, which, when divided by 12 months, equals the monthly rate per unit.

Q38. Why not put meters on all homes and use the meters to determine how much each homeowner should pay?:

Answer:

The cost of purchasing, installing, reading, maintaining and replacing meters on homes where no public water service exists would add an additional 15% to our base fixed costs, and therefore, would defeat the purpose of the meters, as everyone's rate would need to be increased to cover the metering, reading, and service costs.

Q39. Why do I have to pay the monthly rate if I am not home for a period of time (ie. it is a cottage and not being used all the time)?

Answer:

As discussed above, it was determined the most equitable method is to charge each customer a flat rate per unit. Without water meters at each customer, we have no means of determining when the owners are present or when they are gone. Even if we had water meters, the fixed costs of the system would be billed regardless of use.

Q40. How long must it be disconnected so I don't have to pay?

Answer:

Under current policy, to discontinue sewer use billing requires at least one or more of the following conditions be met:

- Electric meter shut off for structures with well water systems.
- Interior plumbing disconnected (stools set aside & traps disconnected under all sinks), including any incidental use (furnaces, etc.)
- Public water shut off (if connected to public water)
- Must be vacant for at least 12 months with no incidental use
- Sewer disconnected at the street (excavated and properly capped-off)

Q41. If I didn't get the bill, why do I have to pay the late charge?

Answer:

If we discover we did not send a bill, or we erred in sending the bill, we will void the late charge; however, if the mailing address is the last one of record and we sent the invoice with proper postage, we must make the assumption the invoice was delivered and therefore, a late fee must be charged and collected.

Q42. Does the pressure grinder station electrical circuit require a separate junction box and control box on the home?

Answer:

Yes. A dedicated circuit, 220 volt, 30 amp, with exterior breaker is required, as well as the Control Box supplied with the unit.

Q43. What are potential/known difficulties or differences with pressure-grinder pump systems as compared to gravity sewers and how does the Authority propose to address these:

Answer:

Main-line (pressure main) isolation/set back from drinking water wells.

Main-line pressure sewers in the roadways are required to be 50 feet from all drinking water wells. We will have our engineer locate each homeowner's well during design. If your well is too close to the road, we will request a variance from the Health Department for our main line installation. In some cases, we may have to "sleeve" our pressure main during initial installation to meet Health Department variance requirements.

Grinder Tank + small diameter on-site discharge line isolation/set back from drinking water wells:

The health department requires that wastewater tanks and pressure lines be 50 feet from water wells. In the event the grinder basin (tank) cannot be reasonably placed 50 feet from neighboring wells, we will request a variance from the Health Department. The small diameter pressure line from the tank to the street (generally 1¼ inch diameter), may need to be "sleeved" in order to meet Health Department regulations. These will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

On-site installation difficulties:

Generally, the installation of the Grinder Tank and Pump Unit, including the 1¼ - inch line to the street is more expensive than gravity residential connection to the street (via a 4" gravity pipe). The tank unit is usually located within 10 feet +/- of the existing septic tank to the street and the lid is visible, that is, it is required to be 3" above grade to prevent water seepage in to the lid and to be serviceable by Authority personnel.

Odor:

Generally, odors are not prevalent with the Grinder Tanks themselves. Odors through the house vent stacks (on the roof) are possible, similar to those of a septic tank at times. We will provide "vent stack extensions" containing activated charcoal to any homes that have problems in this regard.

Forcemain back-flow:

When each home connects to the Pressure sewer, a dual check-valve system is installed to prevent wastewater from the low-pressure main in the street from back-flowing into the grinder basin and into the home.

Power outages-electrical:

We will not supply back-up power to individual grinder pumps during power outages. At the time of connection, or later, at homeowner's option, a homeowner may request a generator receptacle be made available on the control panel. This will require an electrical permit and a submittal to the Authority office. The parts cost for this upgrade is estimated to be \$250, including the required switching mechanism to transfer power safely. It will require wiring by a licensed electrician and inspections by the Township and Authority personnel.

Power outages-overflow:

The Grinder Pump basin holds 35 gal/ft and typically has 2 feet of working volume. When the power is out, most homes do not have electricity to their well either. However, if a homeowner continues to utilize water during a power outage, after 35-50 gallons, there is a danger in "backing" up your wastewater into the home. This is similar to a failed septic system when the wastewater has no place to go.

Clogged pump:

The pump units occasionally will fail to discharge wastewater due to foreign matter such as rags, fibrous towels, excessive grease build-up, condoms, plastics, or other materials plugging the vanes of the pump/grinder unit. These items are not to be discharged into the public sewer system in general and are considered deleterious to the wastewater transportation system. Should this occur, the high water light and buzzer will come on. At this point, it is important for the homeowner to discontinue use of water (including water softener discharge).

Continued use of water will result in wastewater "back-up" conditions. When we arrive at the home, we will open the basin, pull the pump and attempt to clean and put back in service. If necessary, we will install a replacement pump. If the homeowner is responsible for repeatedly discharging foreign substances into the basin, notice will be given. Excessive call-outs to a single address may result in cost-recovery action from the "violating" homeowner.

Failed pump:

The pumps are very durable and last 10-15 years, however, occasionally, the pump will “wear out” or the motor will fail. When this happens, the Authority will replace the pump at no extra charge to the homeowner. These pumps, in 2006 dollars, cost \$800 to rebuild, or \$1200 to purchase new.

Pressure pipe failure:

The pipes utilized today are very durable and failures are rare.

Tank coupling failure:

There have been occasional failures where the pressure pipe connects to the grinder basin at the basin (3 foot depth). This is due to dissimilar materials reacting differently with soil conditions, water table elevations, etc. We will require the use of a flexible coupling where the tank connects to the pressure line to the street, which will eliminate any problems in this regard.

Location of grinder unit and pressure line:

The homeowner can select, to a reasonable degree, where the unit and line should be located. Over time, however, it is inevitable that some homeowners will want to add on to his/her garage or home, and the unit and/or line will have to be relocated at homeowner expense. It is not permitted to construct permanent dwellings over the pressure line once it is installed. If a line must be located under a dwelling or building during initial installation, the pressure line will not become the responsibility of the Authority.

Control panel location:

The control panels, mounted on the side of the home, must be visible from the tank location and should be visible to the homeowner. The Authority uses standard relay and switchgear within the control panels and these latching relays do “click” in and out as the pump starts and stops. It is not recommended these panels be installed on the bedroom exterior walls, as late night usage of water (water softeners or teenagers) will cause the pump to start and stop, and has been known to disrupt sleep with some homeowners.

Control panel electrical components:

The Authority, as noted above, rather than using solid state technology, requires the use of old-fashioned switchgear which has been proven to be more durable + less susceptible to lightning interruption and failure due to voltage fluctuations. Occasionally, a component within the control panel will malfunction and the high water buzzer and light will notify the homeowner to call us for repair service.

Electrical service:

The grinder pump system requires 220volt – 30 amp service from the homeowners’ own electrical service. The homeowner provides his/her own power for the pumping of wastewater into the system. It is estimated this cost is less than \$2.00 per month on the homeowner’s electrical bill.

Winterizing:

If a homeowner is leaving for greater than 30 days it is advised that he/she call our office and notify us who to contact if the alarm should go off. It is not necessary to shut down the electrical service to the unit nor to flush the unit.

Miss Dig call-outs.

In a conventional gravity system, the homeowner is responsible for the pipe to the street, whereas with the grinder system, the Authority owns the grinder unit and pipe out to the street, and therefore, each time work is being done in the yard, such as: fencing, excavating, tree planting, gas, electric or telephone underground work, the homeowner or contractor call for staking of utilities. The Authority will be responsible to flag the yard and to work with the contractors to ensure the pipeline integrity is maintained up to the grinder basin unit.

Q44. If the grinder pump system has the above potential issues, is the monthly sewer fee proposed to be the same as for the rest of the Gull Lake Gravity System?

Answer:

No, the monthly sewer fee for the lake-area pressure-grinder system will be \$28 per month. This could be more if maintenance costs (annually documented) prove that additional funds are needed for maintenance.

If the gravity system is constructed for Sherman Lake, the monthly cost for all customers will be the same as the remainder of the Gull Lake Districts, currently \$20 per month.

Q45. When a resident experiences a failure with his pressure grinder station, what is the targeted response time?

Answer:

Between 8 am – 5 pm, service is expected to be within 2 hours. After hours, a paging system will contact us and we will phone you back, assessing the severity of the immediate situation. If it is not severe, we will ask you minimize water use and we will be there at 8 am.

Q46. What is the Authority?

Answer:

A Utility Authority is formally established using enabling legislation of the State of Michigan. When two or more municipalities wish to share public services using a dedicated agency, an Authority is one of the options permitted by state statute.

The Gull Lake Sewer and Water Authority was created in late 1979 by the four townships of Ross and Richland - in Kalamazoo County, and Barry and Prairieville in Barry County to provide sanitary sewer around Gull Lake. The Authority is the agent for the municipalities it serves. The Authority collects wastewater from over 2000 customers in northern Kalamazoo County, Michigan, using a network of over 50 miles of collector sewers, 35 pumping stations and associated trunk sewers. Wastewater is pumped to the City of Kalamazoo for treatment and final disposal. The Authority provides complete system management, maintenance, repair and upgrades.

For additional information on our history, click here: [Authority History Link](#)

Q47. What is the service area of the Authority?

Answer:

The current service area consists of the Townships of Ross, Richland, Cooper, Village of Richland and a portion of Charleston Township in Kalamazoo County, plus the southerly portion of Barry and Prairieville Townships in Barry County. The existing sanitary sewer pipeline does not service all parts of all municipalities, serving at this time, the more densely populated areas of the Townships and Villages. Our web site has maps depicting the immediate service districts and customer area.

For a map of our service area, click here: [Service District 2010](#)

Q48. New Office: Why, in this difficult economic times, is the Authority undertaking an office expansion?

Answer:

The timing of an office expansion + remodeling project was coincidental, as we have been planning this since 2007; however, it does make sense to undertake a project such as this when construction costs are low, and, perhaps a few local contractors will benefit from the work? The number of new homes being constructed and connected to the sewer system has diminished from 100 per year to approximately 50 per year, allowing us time to focus on such an office project.

Q49. New Office: Will the work be done by local companies?

Answer:

We chose 10 reputable general contractors from the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek area to bid on the project. We anticipate local contractors doing the work.

Q50. New Office 2010: Why is the expansion needed?

Answer:

The Authority has, over the past 25 years, doubled the size of the sewer service district, (from 1000 connections to 2200 connections) and we are out of maintenance staffing space, filing space and meeting room space. Our existing office is 1,300 square feet and we are proposing to add 1,500 sq feet as a conference room and front office space for the Office Manager and Billing Clerk. The remaining-existing interior space will be reconfigured to add filing space and maintenance staffing space. Also, our current driveway entrance off of M-89 is unsafe and we are

making site improvements that will reconfigure the drive to come in off of 37th street.

The Authority has established the following goals for the project:

- Additional office space for maintenance staff (currently housed in pole barn)
- Access to electronic information systems for maintenance staff
- Additional office space needed for front office staff
- Conference meeting room space for Board meetings / public meetings
- Additional filing space needed for records
- Need for site improvements to eliminate M-89 driveway

Q51. New Office 2010: How is the project being financed?

Answer:

The Authority has set aside funds from new connections sufficient enough to finance the project without borrowing funds or using quarterly user fees. The capital costs of the office expansion, remodel and site improvements does not directly impact the quarterly user fees.

Q52. New Office 2010: Will we be able to pay our bills at the office during construction?

Answer:

Yes, the contractor will be required to maintain access to the building for most of the three month construction period.