

## **WASTE WATER, LIKE IT OR NOT HIDEAWAY HAS IT, LOTS OF IT**

Over the past 24 months, the WASTE WATER TASK FORCE has been meeting at the direction of the Mayor to investigate this issue. (What is waste water, water from toilets, sinks and showers that drain into a collection and distribution system on your property). In 2018, the Hideaway Board of Directors asked the city to assume responsibility for research recommendations from the Strategic Plan regarding waste water in the Hideaway community. To that end, a team was formed and the culmination of their efforts resulted in the "Hideaway Lake Waste Water Planning Team" report presented to the City in August 2019. The report addressed two issues, current individual septic systems and a community wide sanitary sewer system. Upon receiving the report, Mayor Hutchison appointed a WASTEWATER TASK FORCE to conduct a deeper dive into the two scenarios. The Task Force was composed of City Aldermen, a representative of the Board of Directors and citizen volunteers. After two years of meetings, subject matter expert presentations, and investigation of legal options, the Task Force is ready to make some recommendations.

Regarding a community wide Sanitary Sewer System, the results are pretty clear. 1) the City, not the club, is authorized by the State of Texas to provide Sanitary Sewer, and 2) the City does not have the money or the ability of obtain grants or matching funds to provide such a massive undertaking. Let's talk about the city. The City of Hideaway was incorporated 20 years ago to prevent surrounding communities from annexing the community. The City owns no property, doesn't have responsibility for the roads, has no employees, issues no permits, collects no property of ad valorem taxes or other revenues from the residents and is operated by an elected Board of Aldermen, and a Mayor. The City does have expenses and income. Income is primarily from Franchise fees collected from service providers that access the rights of way along our streets, i.e., SuddenLink, Crystal Systems, Oncor, etc. These fees have been reducing in recent years. The major expenses for the City are proportionate payment of Fire Protection costs and RAVE, the community emergence alert system. Without historical records of income streams sufficient to funds capital improvement (such as a sewer system) the City of incapable of providing sanitary sewer at this time.

That brings us to our Septic situation. Hideaway is possibly the most densely populated community in the State of Teas that is 95% percent processing effluent through individual septic systems. The Texas Commission on Environment Quality authorizes and regulates what they call OSSF (on site sewer facilities) through designated agents, Counties, Municipalities and Water Districts. At this time Smith County has oversight for installation, masintenance and repair of septic systems within the county. Existing systems are not routinely monitored for proper working order. Complaints are most often not remedied and fines are not imposed. Installation of new systems and major repair of existing defective systems are required to be permitted, and therefore have a revenue stream. Complaint resolution has no such benefit and rarely rises to the actionable level. For existing systems, it is the responsibility of the property owner to maintenance.

Many of the septic systems in Hideaway are original to the construction of the residence. Without upgrades, many systems are 30 to 40 years old. The typical life cycle of a septic system is 20 years, and without routine maintenance require frequent pumping of the holding tank. Thus, the often seen waste water transport trucks in Hideaway. With this background, the Waste Water Task Force is prepared to make the following recommendations to the Council of Aldermen.

- 1) That the City of Hideaway proceed with fulfilling State Requirements to become the Designated Agent for the City of Hideaway.
- 2) That the City of Hideaway engage legal counsel to assist in preparation of the documents and ordinances required for submittal to the TECQ for designation approval.
- 3) That the City of Hideaway employ
  - a. part time help in documenting and retaining records and payments such designation would require and
  - b. a certified OSSF inspector.
- 4) That the City of Hideaway require inspection and documentation of proper working order of on-site septic systems at any change of property ownership other than vacant lots where no such system currently exists.
- 5) That the City of Hideaway issue permits and provide inspection for all new and replacement septic systems.
- 6) That the City of Hideaway investigate any and all complaints or knowledge of existing system failures and require documentation or repair.
- 7) That the City of Hideaway investigate revenue sources to establish consistency and competency to apply for and manage grant or matching funds for a community wide sewer system in the future.

Sincerely,

Carol Ann Sample, Mayor Pro Tem

Katrina Cochran, Hideaway Board of Directors,

Task Force Members in agreement,

Omer Adams, Pat Bonds, Bob Evans, Marjorie Ferrell,

Sandy McRoberts, Michael Ragsdale, Ron Strickland