

**VILLAGE OF SCHOOLCRAFT  
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE VILLAGE COUNCIL  
January 29, 2020**

The special Meeting of the Village Council held at the Municipal Complex located at 442 N. Grand Street was called to order by President Gunnett at 6:00 p.m.

The Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance were led by President Gunnett.

**ROLL CALL:**

Present: President Gunnett, Trustees, Rochholz, Mastenbrook, Barnes, Stodola, Spears and Carlin.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Village Manager Cheri Lutz, Clerk Theresa O'Leary, Finance Director/Assistant Manager Tammi Youngs, Officer Eric Ray, Linda Barnes, Doug McMillan, Petey and Johanne Mathews, Jamie Edwards, Jennifer Gottschalk, Mae Pfost, Sam Andres, Joe Beck, TJ Gill, Margaret Beck, Eric McGehee, Kirk and Kelly Bergland, Sue Moore, Katie Redmond, Shannon Smith, Deb Christiansen, Kathy Avairs, Lori Hoekema, Rod Hill, Darbey Fetzer, Bret Willis, Brent Smith, Andy Polishak, Jaelyn Brohl, Max Hutchison, Tom Gill, Carol Helt, and Stephanie McDonald.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

President Keith Gunnett explained the revised timeline from Wightman regarding sanitary sewer. He made the following statements:

- He stated that the Public Hearing will start the 45-day appeal period for every person in the Village that pays a water bill.
- He stated that if the sanitary sewer were to be voted through, and later decided not to pursue, an appeal must be made in Circuit Court during the 45-day appeal period.
- He stated that there will be no decision made at the Public Hearing, but will probably be made at the next Council meeting.
- He stated if a decision were to move forward with sanitary sewer, a Resolution must be approved by the Village Council.
- He stated the Drain Commission assigns a Drain Board to serve as a conduit between SCWSA and USDA Rural Development.
- He stated that the adopted Resolution will tell Drain Commission to put together a petition to submit application to USDA.
- He stated it takes about 60 to 90 days for USDA to determine how much in grant monies we will get and that is outside the 45-day appeal period.
- He stated SCWSA has approved a two-month extension in order to obtain additional information.
- He stated that Vicksburg may be interested in the proposed project.
- He stated that the original timeline presented by Wightman is now pushed out three months.
- He stated Wightman will recalculate costs to include the Village of Vicksburg.

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President Gunnett's statements continued:

- He stated a possible \$7 million project on north US 131 could potentially tie in to our sanitary sewer project. This would reduce costs.

**STATEMENTS FROM CITIZEN'S AND MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS:**

Trustee Rochholz had the following statements:

- He stated is Vicksburg is joining the municipalities that are talking about getting sanitary sewer, a lagoon will not be possible. A mechanical plant would have to be built.
- He stated that this is a very difficult decision. No matter what decision is made someone is not going to be happy. He hopes the community will pull together no matter what the outcome.
- He stated USDA offers Federal not State grants.
- He stated he believes all municipalities that ask for grant money receive it.
- He stated we cannot go with another firm.
- He stated the Council represents all members of the community.

Trustee Stodola had the following statements:

- He stated the Drain Board is required to give notice of public hearing.
- He stated it is disappointment that financial information cannot be obtained prior to making a decision.
- He stated the Council should get independent legal advice.
- He stated we don't want to do it quickly, we want to do it right.
- He stated we have to think about the future.
- He stated he is willing to meet with anyone to hear and discuss their opinion on sanitary sewer.
- He stated that the Village cannot afford a project on our own.
- He stated a critical part of consideration is the lifecycle of the infrastructure.

Trustee Mastenbrook had the following questions:

- She asked if any other municipality in Michigan has been denied a grant.
- She asked if DEQ has approved a site for Wightman.

Trustee Spears had the following comment:

- He said the bidding processing for the school bond is different that the process the Village is going through for sanitary sewer. They are two separate items and they are not good comparisons.

Max Hutchison had the following comments:

- He stated he does not believe we can back out of the sanitary sewer project once the Resolution is signed.

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President Gunnett had the following comments:

- He stated DEQ does have an approved site, however the location is confidential.
- He stated that he will ask Wightman if any other municipality in Michigan has been denied a grant.
- He stated it was Wightman's suggestion to proceed with a Drain Board.
- He stated if petitions were used, we could find out cost before a decision was made.
- He stated South County Water and Sewer Authority has a signed, binding contract with Wightman.
- He stated the Village did not approach Wightman to ask for services.
- He stated the Drain Board has the ultimate say. South County Sewer and Water Authority will be the bonding agency.
- He stated he will contact other municipalities that have used Wightman for sanitary sewer projects.
- He stated the Village has paid no money yet for Wightman's services.

Darby Fetzer had the following comment:

- She stated that Schoolcraft will benefit from Vicksburg Mill.

Jennifer Gottshalk had the following statement:

- She suggested going with a different engineering firm.
- She stated that Council needs to go through the process.
- She stated that all citizens need to support the Council and stop complaining.

Margaret Beck had the following comments:

- She stated she is pro sewer.
- She stated the more information the better.
- She stated that perhaps we should investigate the pros and cons of sanitary sewer vs septic.

Mae Pfof had the following comments:

- She stated for clarification that a Drain Board is going to be assembled specifically for the sanitary sewer project.
- She stated she is happy Vicksburg is going to be involved.

Rod Hill had the following comment:

- He stated he would like to know cost before making a decision.
- He asked if a grant is not received, who would bear the additional cost.

Andy Polishak had the following statements:

- He stated the key issue in every meeting is legacy.
- He stated he understands no one wants to pay the cost of sanitary sewer.
- He stated that we owe it to our predecessors to think about the future.
- He stated we should think about the Village's motto, Preserving the Past, Enriching our Present, Planning our Future.

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Pete Mathews had the following statement:

- He stated he would not buy something without knowing the cost.

Brent Smith had the following statement:

- He stated he doesn't want to see the town die.
- He stated the costs we have been given are the costs not including possible grant monies.

Sam Andres had the following statements:

- He stated that 90% of communities do sanitary sewer on their own.
- He stated everyone can maintain their septic system if they are diligent.
- He stated that getting sanitary sewer will drive businesses out of the Village.
- He stated sanitary sewer will not bring in businesses.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

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Keith F. Gunnett, President

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Theresa O'Leary, Clerk