

ROCK FALLS NEWS

OCTOBER 2007

WWW.ROCKFALLSIOWA.COM



How Important is Your Sewer to You?

In mid-September, the City Council began an intensive evaluation of the community sewer system. The sewer system is one of the largest assets of the community and is integral to the comfort and well-being of all citizens. The upkeep and perpetuation of the system is critical.

The system was constructed about 25 years ago in an effort to replace individual septic systems that had a propensity to cause ground water and surface water pollution. Due to elevation and rock formations along the river, a gravity sewer system was not a good option. Therefore, a pressurized system was constructed that could actually push the effluent uphill to a lagoon that is higher than most of the city.

The heart of the system is a machine called a grinder-pump. Each household is connected to a buried tank that contains such a pump. As the tank fills with sewage, the pump kicks on, shreds any solids in the sewage and pumps the sewage into pipes that eventually connect to the lagoon. There are about 80 pumps in lift stations throughout the city.

According to industry sources, the life expectancy of the grinder-pump is 7-10 years. To date, about 20 of the 80 residential pumps have been replaced

with new pumps. That leaves 60 pumps that are now 25 years old. The city has certainly

got its money's worth on these 60 pumps. However, it is not likely that the city can expect another 25 years of service from these pumps. Therefore, the city council has embarked upon a capital improvement strategy to determine the best course of action to upgrade and maintain the system. There is little doubt that the system can be maintained at the present household rate structure.

The City Council is meeting every Monday evening with PeopleService, Inc. personnel to systematically formulate a 5-year strategic plan for bringing the sewer system to a sustainable level. The council has begun the process by determining minimum standards for equipment repair and replacement. This includes the decision process for repair or replacement of grinder-pumps, along with the particular model of pump to install.

The process will then move to a 5-year timetable on expected pump replacements along with inspection and repair of the collection system and treatment system. For example, the 3-cell treatment lagoon is in reasonably good condition today, but will most likely need a complete replacement of the riprap within five years. This will cost several thousand dollars. Also, the discharge mains below the lagoon have manhole structures that will need sealing and cleaning sometime during the 5-year time span.

Once the standards are set and the needs determined, the cost of the improvements will be calculated. At this point the council will need to determine how to finance the project. It is expected that the project will cost several hundred thousand dollars.



If your red light is blinking or for emergency sewer service, phone PeopleService, Inc at

1-888-861-1921

Vandals exist in Rock Falls. Early in September vandals visited the grounds of the Community Center. Steel fence posts that are used for fencing on Fun Days were scattered about the grounds. In addition, a fence post was used to batter the walls of the walk-in cooler that sits near the basketball court. Serious dents were inflicted, but the walls were not completely penetrated. To complete the process, blue spray paint was used to write obscenities on the cooler and paint was sprayed into some of the electrical outlets near the cooler. The damage was reported to the county sheriff.



Snow Birds Prepare

Once again, it is time remind persons who may be leaving Rock Falls for an extended time during the winter to inform City Hall or PeopleService, Inc. of such plans. It is felt that most people who leave for several weeks ask someone to watch over the property in the owners' absence. That might include a weekly walk-through to look for damage, leaks, or to water plants. Ideally, that walk-through could include running a fair amount of water down the sewer. Such a flushing could help keep the sewer mechanisms operational and keep the discharge lines open. If a flushing is not possible, PeopleService, Inc. will try to open the lift station tank and flush from outside. Such outside servicing can be a bit dependent upon snow and ice conditions near the lift station.