

Sewer Update 5/27/2009

Spring is fading fast and summer is well on its way. Things have been happening with the sewer system and the people that operate and maintain it.

On May 7 of this year Infrastructure Alternatives, Inc. (IA) has taken over the operation and maintenance of the Grattan sewer system. Their home base is in Rockford Michigan. You will be seeing a lot of activity now since the new operators plan to inventory the entire system, prioritize all the repairs that need to be done and submit the inventory to the township. Their trucks are white with their logo on the door.

The emergency number on all the sewer stations; 691-7784, will stay the same, so please write it down and put it in an obvious place. Always feel free to call this number if you have any concerns about your sewer system or see a warning light on. You are our first and best line of defense against sewer overflows. Whenever you witness a power outage please call the emergency number immediately since the sewer operators may not be aware of the outage and time is of the essence when the pump stations are without power.

Another goal we are hoping to achieve is the reduction of water softener discharge into the township sewer system. This water is heavily laden with Sodium and Chloride which does not break down naturally and stays in the water through it's entire cycle. Eventually this salt may find its way back into your well water. Please do your best to find an alternative method of disposing of this water and eliminate it from the township sewers.

One day after their start, Infrastructure had a minor Sanitary Sewer Overflow at a small grinder pump station on 7481 Ravine Dr. The emergency light was burnt out so no warning was given. The nearest resident noticed water seeping out of the manhole and reported it right away. No wastewater entered the lake and it only advanced about six feet from the manhole cover before it was corrected. The estimated spillage was about 15 gallons. We owe our thanks to the resident that called this in.

IA will be on a six month trial period in which time they will figure out if they can operate and maintain our sewer within our budget and also give the township time to evaluate their performance and judge whether we want to continue their services. If they can stay within our budget and their service is acceptable, their contract will be approved for an additional year and one half.

The township has reduced it's operation and maintenance budget for this fiscal year and channeled that money into the Capital Fund account. This will enable us to have more money for major repairs but will create a major challenge to operate our system on the reduced O&M budget.

Two irrigation projects are currently in the planning stages; one is the major upgrade of the Grattan/Vergennes (G/V) irrigation system and the other is a minor upgrade of the Grattan irrigation system.

The G/V upgrade was mandated by the DEQ and is a condition of DEQ approval of a recently submitted application for renewal of our permit to discharge wastewater. I am currently working on the project to obtain estimates for work to be done, judging what paper work must be submitted and establishing time lines for the upgrade work itself. I currently am planning on starting the project in the fall of 2010 and completion of the project is slated for the following

Spring 2011, before the irrigation season starts. The DEQ may request a change in this schedule based on submittal of the Discharge Management Plan.

This Discharge Management Plan outlines what the township intends to do at the G/V site, irrigation equipment planned, number of acres to be irrigated, condition of the soils and other specific information that will give the DEQ a clear picture of what we plan to do and when.

Currently there are no plans for a major increase in sewer user rates, however small increases to cover inflationary increases may occur. These will be based on the Consumer Index.

If anyone that is still paying the special assessment from 2003 needs information regarding their current balance, please contact the Sewer Billing Clerk at 616-691-8450.

The minor irrigation upgrade is for the Grattan site on Lincoln Lake. Critical lagoon levels for the past two years has convinced me that more water has to be eliminated from this system to return these lagoons to their designed levels which allows for plenty of winter storage without fearing critical water levels in the Spring. Our former and present operators agree with this assessment. We are hoping to pay for this upgrade with our Capital Fund Account currently in place.

To accomplish this I have requested, in writing to the DEQ, for approval of a weekly increase of .35 inches. While not seeming like much it will result in the elimination of over 3 million gallons per year. We are also requesting an extra month of irrigation at the end of the regular season.

New information has come to light regarding the isolated power outages on Big Pine Island Lake. Consumers has reported that they will be reconfiguring the power lines around the West side of the lake in order to avoid the wooded area that has been causing problems in the past. This work is scheduled for the fall of 2009. Consumers is confident that this work will dramatically reduce the power outages that occur in that area.

As always please avoid putting anything into your sewer that it is not designed to handle. Commonly flushed and sometimes uncommon items are feminine products, dental floss, chemicals of any sort, diapers, handi-wipes, paper towels, underwear, hair or any other materials that do not belong in your sewer. Taking care of your sewer will save you money and potential problems when the sewer pumps quit working because of debris entering the pump stations.

This is your sewer system and you are paying to maintain it. Treat it like you would any other valuable possession you own. Plus the fact that it is in its senior years and requires a little extra care.

Sewer Administrator
Frank Force