

**Oneida County Sewer District SSO Abatement Project
Steering Committee Meeting Report
May 28, 2009
5:30 p.m.
New York Mills Community Center**

Municipality	Representative	Attendance
The Village of Clayville		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Nancy Sheppard	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Mike Steiger	X
The Town of Deerfield		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Scott Mahardy Peggy Boshart	
<i>Community Delegate</i>		
Town of Frankfort		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Joseph Kinney	
<i>Community Delegate</i>		
Village of Holland Patent		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Michael Bennison David Wilcox	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Peter Gaige	
The Town of Marcy		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Brian Scala Keith Schuderer	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Carson Sorrell	X
The Town of New Hartford		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Earle Reed Roger Cleveland	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Scot Owens	
Alternate	Christine Krupa	
The Village of New Hartford		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Donald J. Ryan Don Bathke	X X
	John Grygiel	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Richard Sherman	
The Village of New York Mills		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Robert Maciol Joseph Urban	X X
<i>Community Delegate</i>	George Majka	X
The Village of Oriskany		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Don Rothdiener Mick O'Connnor	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Chris Burch	

The Town of Paris		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Felix Cardillo	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Jim Hogel	
Town of Schuyler		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Kenneth Dodge	
<i>Community Delegate</i>		
The City of Utica		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee OR Designee	David Roefero Deb Day Mike Mahoney	
The Village of Whitesboro		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Richard Pugh Chester Kowalski	X X
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Joe Lazenby	X
The Town of Whitestown		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Charles R. Gibbs II Sal Granato	X
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Bill Schmitt	
The Village of Yorkville		
Chief Elected Official OR Designee	Bruno Petruccione Anthony Leone, Jr.	
<i>Community Delegate</i>	Ken Schaaf	X
Oneida County		
<i>Community Delegate</i> <i>Community Delegate</i>	Bruce Brodsky Harvey Yando	X
<i>County Executive Chief of Staff</i>	Al Candido	
Oneida County Sewer District		
Commissioner	Steve Devan	X
Counsel	Peter Rayhill	X
Project Consulting Team		
Shumaker Engineering	Karl Schrantz Jim Luz	X
Paige Group	Nancy Pattarini	X
Paige Group	Liz Warfel	X
Paige Group	Diane Stirling	X
Fiscal Advisors	Mark Colopy	X
Guests in Attendance:		
New York State DEC, Region 6	Judy Drabicki Skip Shoemaker	
League of Women Voters	Barbara Weaver	

Meeting Highlights

Introductions

Paige Group introduced two new support staff: Diane Stirling, Communications Director, who will assist in the areas of funding, grants and government affairs; and Elizabeth (Liz) Warfel, Project Manager, who will be taking on the responsibility of meeting coordination and logistics.

Working Group

The working group met on May 15th with Sandi Allen from New York State's DEC. Ms. Allen described existing programs that are available for funding. The working group noted they were aware of most of the opportunities discussed, but that Ms. Allen will be a good resource for questions and support when funding opportunities become available.

Ms. Allen also provided correspondence from the State Comptroller's office, dated December 2008, to demonstrate the necessity for State Comptroller approval for user charges (taxes and fees) on projects that are above certain thresholds. To determine the thresholds, projects are broken down by town district, and by water and sewer type projects. The maximum annual cost threshold per town sewer district user is \$739. If a project is above that threshold, it needs approval from the comptroller. For a county project, the annual estimated user charge (the threshold) is \$307.

Ms. Allen noted that she would attempt to locate a recent compilation of sewer use rates across the State of New York and provide a copy to the Working Group. It is observed that the local sewer rates are lower than the average.

Funding

Two grant applications went out May 28th seeking funding for two small district projects. The first application is for a manhole rehabilitation project.

The second application is for an interim I/I reduction project. The engineering consultants previously put together a report (Interim I/I Reduction Plan) that includes a listing of potential projects that could be undertaken to address known I/I sources. This plan is the basis for the grant application.

Both grant applications are going in under the Green Innovations Grant Program because one of the eligible projects for this grant is removing storm water from sanitary sewers.

Operating and Capital Budgets

The attendees discussed the current sewer use rate schedule. The process of evaluating the sewer use rate structure occurs during the June–August time frame and is addressed by the county legislature simultaneously with the adoption of the county budget. A discussion ensued regarding the potential benefit of the expanding the rate schedule to include the establishment of a reserve fund to support future capital projects (construction costs and/or debt services). This led to discussion on whether the rate should be uniform

across the district or variable by community based on each community's contribution of I/I to the system.

Commissioner Devan explained the process to establish the annual sewer use rate. He noted that the rate is based on the estimated operating budget for the upcoming year plus OCSD debt service, all divided by the anticipated water consumption (sewer billing is based on water consumption). The resulting user rate is then submitted to the County Legislature for approval. Mr. Devan suggested that a recommendation and support from the Steering Committee and member municipalities to add an additional cost to the rate to be collected and earmarked for the sewer project is encouraged. That recommendation would go to the county executive and Board of Legislators. It was decided this issue should be discussed in more detail at the next Steering Committee meeting.

Sewer System Evaluations

The scope of the original sewer system evaluation study was anticipated to include limited flow metering followed by field work in those areas identified as being the significant contributors of I/I. Those areas were expected to be limited. However, the flow metering and subsequent manhole inspections have identified the I/I problem to be system wide across all municipalities to varying degrees. Mr. Devan noted that each time a new area is inspected, I/I problems are identified that were unexpected. While the engineering consultants intend to work within the available budget established by Oneida County, the various additional investigations and programs recommended by the consultants may cost upwards of an additional \$2.7 million. These additional investigations and programs are important components of the overall sustainability of any SSO abatement project implemented by the county and communities.

Field Work

Bid packages for CCTV and smoke testing were received on May 6. Contracts have been awarded and work will begin in June. The areas specifically being targeted for televising and smoke testing are based on the results of the flow metering. However, the county has structured the unit price contracts so that communities not scheduled for testing, but would like to take advantage of the county's unit prices, may do so.

Map identifying the areas targeted for CCTV and smoke testing will be provided to the municipalities and will be available online.

The county and the consulting engineers have regularly shared data with the communities. If a community has not yet received data specific to their community, it is because data has not yet been collected in that area.

Those present were reminded to review the maps of their communities previously provided, mark them up with suspected private property I/I sources, and return to either Roger Cleveland or the consulting engineers.

DEC Meeting on 5/21/09

The consultants, Committee Chair Roger Cleveland and Commissioner Devan met with Regional Engineer Skip Shoemaker, Regional Director Judy Drabicki, and Regional Water Engineer Steve Botsford from NYSDEC – Region 6. This was a project status meeting to give NYSDEC an update on the project status and to impress upon the NYSDEC how complicated and wide in scope this project is. Part of the discussion revolved around the private property influence on the sewer system, and how it could take a couple years to just evaluate that problem. This is where local knowledge will be very useful. Since representatives know their own communities the best, they can point the consultants to areas that are most problematic. The consultants have offered to meet with communities one on one to discuss what kind of information they are looking for.

Public Information Program

The point was made that in addition to providing project information to the communities, a “call-to-action” or “next steps” is needed. The sewer system problems can be explained, but without an actionable item (such as volunteering for a home I/I inspection) the message will be lost. However, the point was also made that getting information and educational messaging out there will help people be more open to helping in any way they can. It also is necessary to document private property accomplishments to show the DEC that we are working toward fixing the SSO problem.

It was noted that a few county legislators have suggested that a presentation by the Steering Committee to the full legislature is needed. The discussion needs to focus on work completed, findings, potential impacts, and funding. The consultants will look to the Steering Committee for leadership on accomplishing that presentation.

Communities were again urged to provide either a resolution or letter of support for the overall project and need for state/federal funding. The letters/resolutions will be forwarded on to our state and federal elected officials.

Institutional Structure

Questions arose regarding institutional structure and how that element and funding are closely tied together. Is each community responsible to fix its own sewer? Do we all take responsibility for the problem as a whole and share the costs? The problem is bigger than the municipalities can handle on their own (financially and administratively). It was suggested that the Part-County Sewer District may be the most suitable entity to address and encompass the problem.

Meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm. Next Steering Committee meeting will be held on June 25 at 5:30 pm at the New York Mills Community Center.