

**CITY OF HAMILTON  
COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**DATE:** July 14, 2020

**NAME OF COMMITTEE:** Committee of the Whole

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councilors West, Pogachar, Pruitt, Kemp and Bielski

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Councilor Mitchell

**NOTE TAKER:** Cynthia Fleming, Deputy Clerk

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:** Public Works Director, Donny Ramer

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Council President Kemp opened the meeting at 7:00 pm

**Public Comment**

None.

**Approval of Minutes from 06.23.2020**

Councilor Pogachar moved to approve the minutes. Councilor West seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Agenda Items**

- **Discussion of Request for Proposals to Hire Contract Building Inspector**

Donny Ramer, Public Works Director would like to start advertising the RFP, (Request for Proposals) to hire a contract building inspector. The Zoning Administrator and Building Inspector position is no longer a full time a position. Currently they are able to cover the position, with approximately 10 hours a week. Mr. Ramer provided the members with a breakdown of Building Department revenues since 2015. Revenue from permits and inspections for the last two years has gone down. Currently electrical and plumbing inspection is done by the State. Mr. Ramer said that they would like to take over these inspections. Anything that requires new service from Northwestern Energy has to be inspected. He hopes by taking over these inspection it will speed things up and help get all the inspections done at the same time. He said that he is asking the applicant to specify the specific hours and times they will be available. If it does get busy it will be up to the contract Building Inspector to hire someone to help him. He feels that the contract Building Inspector position will eliminate someone sitting around with nothing to do, when things are slow.

Councilor West asked what kind of experience is required. Mr. Ramer responded that they have to be a licensed inspector for building, plumbing and electrical. The fees are set by the state at 25% of the building permit fee. The City will still be responsible for the administrative part of the equation. Councilor Bielski asked how it works now and if there is a way to give 24 hour notice. We are doing two days a week right now for inspection and we do ask that we be given 24 hour notice. We would like to create a process that has greater efficiency.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Mr. Ramer would like to go ahead and advertise the RFP. At this time he is looking for an informal head nod from the members. When the proposals come in he will bring this item back for approval from the Council. The members were in agreement that he should go forward with advertising for a contract Building Inspector. Councilor Pogachar commented that we can give this a try and evaluate how it is working.

- **Presentation of the SE Hamilton Sewer Study Preliminary Engineering Report by WGM**

Donny Ramer, Public Works Director introduced Jonathan Gass, WGM's principal engineer on the SE Hamilton Sewer Study Preliminary Engineering Report. Mr. Ramer explained that the sewer study project started with a 2018 Treasure State Endowment Program, (TSEP), planning application. With the Daly School expansion we needed to look at how to provide sewer service to Daly Schools. The area that we are looking at is south of Marcus Street and east of Highway 93. There are a lot of properties in this area that have wells and septic tanks that are right next to one another. We did a RFQ and from that process we selected WGM to look at the issue. We have been monitoring this area. It does have an effect on our City water system and the amount of effluent that is running into the river. We are trying to look forward. If we need to put in sewer, having a plan in place would allow us to implement it more quickly.

Jonathon Gass, WGM addressed the Committee telling them that they started working on the report in 2018. The south east Hamilton area is currently unzoned some is County and some is in the City. The goals and objectives of the study included: identifying existing nutrient loads from on site, septic systems, wastewater disposal in the southeast Hamilton area and the Bitterroot River aquifer, considering population projections and future wastewater generation, to evaluate alternative wastewater treatment to protect public health and future water quality, and to provide a plan to assist in future wastewater planning of the southeast Hamilton area.

What we wanted at the end was a document that could be used for future planning. To do so we used a standard engineering report outline that is required for a TSEP grant. We took comments from state and federal agencies. Most comments were in support of the project. We completed a uniform environmental checklist. We prepared cost estimates and identified a preferred alternative.

Mr. Gass said that the study areas is pretty large. It is actually as big as the current City area at 1,200 acres. There are 1002 current parcels and the current population is 2,505. There are 13 different subbasin collection areas and 2 outlying subbasin areas, Golf Course Road and Grantsdale. There is currently no regional public sewer or water infrastructure. There over 1000 individual wells and over 1000 individual different types of septic systems including, seepage pits, septic tanks, drain fields and others of unknown condition. A lot of the systems are old and they are located in a higher density area. These conditions have an adverse effect on water quality. The main thing we are concerned about is the nitrate levels. Nitrates in the aquifer have detrimental

health effects. Sensitive populations include infants, pregnant women and dialysis patients. As nutrients reach the river, higher levels of nitrates causes increased algae growth, decreased oxygen and fish fatalities.

Mr. Gass showed the Committee a map showing the existing conditions of the septic plume. The model, called Arc (GIS) Nitrate Load Estimation Toolkit, (ArcNLET), is a GIS based model that uses topography, soils and septic system locations. The model illustrates where areas of concern are. We identify the existing conditions and the model identifies the septic plume moving towards the Bitterroot River. This model allowed us to create a map of projected septic plume conditions from continued onsite septic systems if no action is taken. The Daly Avenue area is a hot spot that is fairly small but fairly dense. Shady Avenue and north of Blood Lane are two areas they also identified as hotspots. We also looked at population trends. The Grantsdale Road area has more likelihood of being developed because of the larger lot sizes. Population projections over a twenty year time period show Daly, Kurtz Basin, Golf Course Basin and Shady Basin having the greatest amount of growth.

Mr. Gass indicated where the City's public supply wells are marked on the map. We are beginning to see some elevated nitrate levels in existing wells. He explained that loading to the Bitterroot River is slightly less due to the distance to the river. Daly area has high ground water impact but has a further distance to travel to get to the river. The Shady area has both high ground water and river impact.

There are 13 drainage basins in the study area. We used population trends and data including wastewater per capita, wastewater generation, Department of Environmental, (DEQ) peaking factor and max peak hourly flow to forecast future scenarios of Bitterroot River nutrient loading. Five different wastewater scenarios were considered and nitrogen load levels were extrapolated based on future population estimates. Current conditions is 30lbs per day, current condition with sewer would be 8 lbs. per day, growth limited by septic permitting 37 lbs. per day, full growth with onsite septic and level 2 treatment, 67 lbs. per day and full growth with sewer, 7 lbs. per day. Mr. Gass said that adding a sewer system to an area will help water quality and added that if water quality is going to be improved, centralized treatment would be the best alternative. A gravity sewer lays out well with the topography of the valley. A sewer master plan for the area would include interceptor mains and collection mains for side streets. There would be potential for phased development –decentralized treatment. Decentralized areas could eventually connect with City sewer.

Mr. Gass provided the members with cost estimates for each of the basins. He told them that each basin can be looked at separately and recommended two focus areas for immediate improvements, Daly and Shady. With this master plan in place the water can be improved. It provides an area for economic development as well as providing Hamilton a document for future planning. Some of the ground work is already done if grants want to be pursued.

Councilor Bielski asked if the plan included the airport. Mr. Ramer responded that the airport is included in the North Hamilton Urban Renewal District that they are working on with Ravalli County.

Councilor West asked how the map of the effluent flowing toward the river was arrived at. It is based on the topography, Mr. Gass responded and ground water flow direction. Some of it was calibrated and he added, we didn't go home to home and check septic, but we kind of know this area and based on that we arrived at the effluent streams shown on the map. Councilor Kemp asked if the timeline is based on population growth. Director Ramer responded yes and would be development driven. It could also be driven by the Wastewater Treatment Plant, (WWTP) sewer plant permit.

Councilor Kemp commented that the cost to the individual homeowner is expensive and wondered how we address getting people hooked up. Donny Ramer responded that if this is City driven the City would need to bear most of the costs. Some of the areas could come under a Community Development Block Grant, (CDBG).

Councilor West wanted to know how our water is being affected by this. Mr. Gass responded that there is a lot of ground water moving here so we don't see the high spikes but the nutrients are there and they are impacting the river and he added we are fortunate because of the aquifer.

Councilor Bielski asked how this would affect our current plant. Donny Ramer replied that if everyone was hooked up there would have to be upgrades to the wastewater treatment plant. Right now we are running at about 75% capacity.

**RECOMMENDATION:**  
**Informational**

- **Discussion of Covid 19 Issues**

Councilor Kemp began the discussion by saying we now have community spread and may need to reconsider how we hold meetings and what parameters we want to put on them. We are also concerned about mask wearing in Hamilton. We want to be able to support our local merchants. Based on recommendations from the Ravalli County Health Department people should be wearing masks. She added that the Mayor after discussion with the City's department heads have decided that employees should wear masks when they are interacting with others and can't physical distance 6 feet.

Councilor West said that the City of Whitefish was considering a mandatory mask ordinance. Gallatin County was also, but it did not pass and a face mask requirement is in place in Missoula County.

Councilor Pruitt would like to see this to be a standing agenda item. We can get regular updates from the Mayor, our hospital, and Ravalli County Public Health. She commented that there are some businesses that have corporate guidelines such as Glaxo-Smith Kline. (GSK) She would like to coordinate our efforts and let the community know where we stand. Councilor Kemp feels that before Councilors take any kind of action they would need some input from the City Attorney, Karen Mahar. Donny Ramer asked if anyone has talked to any of the business that had to shut down. Mr. Ramer told the members that he had two administrative staff people who were out, on home quarantine, after having first contact and a secondary contact with someone who is infected, and added, that this illustrates how quickly this can impact your work place. This is why he is running split shifts at Public Works. If this happened to my wastewater crew we would really be in trouble.

At approximately 8:00pm Councilor West excused herself, saying she had another meeting she had to attend.

Councilor Bielski agrees that this item needs to stay on the agenda. Is there anything that we can do? I think we need to look at the safety of our community first. She asked Mr. Ramer if there is anything parks related that needs to be talked about. Mr. Ramer stated that when the pandemic first started we were trying to sanitize restrooms multiples time a day, however we are not able to continue doing that. I have a seasonal position that has been open since March and remains unfilled. The bathrooms are sprayed with bleach and cleaned once a day. There are signs basically telling the public to use at your own risk. The playgrounds remain open. We haven't gotten anything from public health to say close the playgrounds. He has relied on public health a lot. He feels it would be good to have public health come to a meeting. At Public Works he has staff with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> degree contacts. He feels that we need to get people here quick and make some decisions. He would like to know what happened at tonight's School Board meeting.

Councilor Kemp said that she would like face coverings mandatory in our public meetings. Councilor Bielski commented that Hamilton has an older community. She feels that we should step up for our older community. Councilor Pruitt commented that she would like someone from public health and the hospital to come to a meeting. Deputy Clerk, Cynthia Fleming, offered to reach out to Ravalli County Public Health, the Hospital, and others on behalf of the members if it could help expedite the decision making process.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Gather additional information to guide decision making on a City mask/face coverings mandate.

**Non-Agenda Items:**

None.

**Topics for Consideration at a Future Meeting**

- Discussion of Fireworks Ordinance
- Discussion of DEQ Grant for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations at City Hall

**Adjourn**

Councilor Pogachar moved to adjourn. Councilor Bielski seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.