

**GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP
WATER & SEWER ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES ~ MARCH 1, 2010**

CALL TO ORDER

A Water & Sewer Advisory Committee meeting was called to order by Don R. Hilton, Sr. at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, March 1, 2010 at the Gaines Charter Township Offices located at 8555 Kalamazoo Avenue SE, Caledonia, Michigan 49316.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Don R. Hilton, Sr., Jeff Gritter, Jan Boone

Members Absent: Brian Tingley, Tim Haagsma

Others Present: Dan Van Dyke, Richard & Marlene Jones

VARIANCE REQUEST – 7682 EASTERN AVENUE

Jeff presented a variance request submitted by Richard & Marlene Jones for the property located at 7682 Eastern Avenue. Mr. and Mrs. Jones hired McDonald's plumbing to install the water service and sewer lateral from the street to the home they are constructing on Eastern Avenue. The building contractor did not communicate to McDonalds Plumbing that the house would have a full basement. The sanitary sewer lateral that has been installed is not deep enough to provide gravity service in accordance with the Gaines Township Water & Sewer Ordinance. In order to approve a variance from Article 12, Section 1203 c. of the Ordinance, the following requirements must be met:

- 1.) Strict application of the Ordinance would cause undue hardship;
- 2.) There are special circumstances applicable to the property in question;
- 3.) The hardship was not caused by applicant's own actions; and
- 4.) A variance would be consistent with the intent of the Ordinance.

Jeff does not think the Township should hold the Mr. and Mrs. Jones responsible for the lack of communication between the contractors.

Mr. Jones stated that they had contracted with McDonalds Plumbing. McDonalds said that they brought the lateral in at the current height because the contractor said the house was being built on a slab and that there is a high water table at this location. The Jones' contracted with McDonalds before they bought the property to be sure they could afford to install utilities. They would not have purchased the property if they had known utilities would cost an additional \$9,000.

Don R. Hilton, Sr. asked if the house has a full eight foot basement?

Mr. Jones replied that it did. The basement had to be raised and is now a daylight basement.

Dan Van Dyke said that the lateral for the property was inspected but it was flagged because it doesn't meet the requirements of the Ordinance to come in at an elevation below the footing to provide gravity service to the home.

Don R. Hilton, Sr. as what the ramifications would be if the variance was approved?

Jeff Gritter replied that since gravity disposal service will not be possible, a grinder pump will be required to provide sanitary sewer service to the lower level of this home. Grinder pumps and electricity can and do fail. It will be the homeowners' responsibility to understand and maintain the grinder pump.

Jan Boone made a motion to recommend approval of the request for variance from Article 12, Section 1203 c. of the Gaines Township Water & Sewer Ordinance submitted by Richard and Marlene Jones for 7682 Eastern Avenue to the Township Board, supported by Jeff Gritter.

Discussion: None.

Ayes: All.

Nays: None.

Abstain: None.

Dan Van Dyke and Richard & Marlene Jones were excused from the meeting at 4:10 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Jan Boone made a motion to approve the September 21, 2009 minutes as written, supported by Don R. Hilton, Sr.

Discussion: None.

Ayes: All.

Nays: None.

Abstain: None.

PAYMENT PLAN REQUEST – 6625 EASTERN AVENUE

Jeff Gritter presented a request for payment plan submitted by Larry Dean of 6625 Eastern Avenue. Mr. Dean needs to connect to sanitary sewer due to a failed septic system. He claims hardship and has requested that the Township allow him to connect to the sewer system and make payments over time. If a payment plan is approved, a voluntary assessment district would have to be created just for Mr. Dean. Mr. Dean documents a monthly income of \$1,800, but a recent income tax statement should be provided prior to any approvals.

Jan Boone commented that the State has a deferment plan.

Jeff Gritter replied that Mr. Dean should pursue the deferment option offered by the State. Through the State, the deferment becomes a lien against the property and accrues interest. The owner can make payments but is not required to. Payment in full is required when the property transfers (sold or deeded to another entity). A fifteen year payment plan with the Township would require an annual payment of about \$700. A ten year plan would require an annual payment of about \$1,000.

Jeff Gritter motion to table this request until the State can be contacted regarding the deferment plans available for Mr. Dean, supported by Don R. Hilton, Sr.

Discussion: None.

Ayes: All.

Nays: None.

Abstain: None.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Jan Boone made a motion supported by Don R. Hilton, Sr. that the Water & Sewer Advisory Committee Officers will be as follows:

- 1.) *Chairman – Tim Haagsma;*
- 2.) *Vice Chairman – Jan Boone; and*
- 3.) *Secretary – Jeff Gritter.*

Discussion: None.

Ayes: All.

Nays: None.

Abstain: None.

WATER METERS & DEPRECIATION

Jeff Gritter stated that he had talked with the auditors while they were in the office working on the FY2009 audit. They mentioned that water meters can be considered capital assets. It would be difficult for the Township to calculate asset amounts as the meters are different ages and therefore have different values. The auditors stated that in the first year the meters could be added to the Township's books as a lump sum and then calculated based on age for the following years as the meters are installed and replaced. It is unclear how this would affect rates since meters are not currently depreciated. Jeff stated that he thinks rates would only change by a penny or two since the value of the meters is approximately 2% to 6% of the current water system value of \$23 million.

Don R. Hilton, Sr. asked if the auditors had made a recommendation?

Jeff Gritter replied that they did not make a recommendation either way. They suggested researching the issue. The real advantage would be the ability to take in funds as a part of the rate structure to replace meters which is something that we constantly do as they fail and become obsolete. Current funding levels for depreciation established by the Township in the rate structure is 30% so the Township would not be fully funding depreciation of the meters through the rates.

Don R. Hilton, Sr. suggested that Jeff Gritter and Jan Boone discuss the benefits of changing water meters to capital assets. If it is decided that there is a great advantage to making the change, the issue will be revisited.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Don Hilton adjourned the meeting at 4:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Jeffrey M. Gritter, P.E.
Township Engineer

**GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP
WATER & SEWER ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES ~ MAY 5, 2010**

CALL TO ORDER

A Water & Sewer Advisory Committee meeting was called to order by Tim Haagsma at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 5, 2010 at the Gaines Charter Township Offices located at 8555 Kalamazoo Avenue SE, Caledonia, Michigan 49316.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Brian Tingley, Tim Haagsma, Jeff Gritter, Jan Boone
Members Absent: Don R. Hilton, Sr.,
Others Present: Dan Van Dyke, Mike Kortman, Gary Byker

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Brian Tingley made a motion to approve the March 1, 2010 minutes with minor revisions, supported by Jan Boone.

Discussion: None.

Ayes: All.

Nays: None.

Abstain: None.

VARIANCE REQUEST – 677 100TH STREET

Jeff presented a variance request submitted by contractor Gary Byker on behalf of the owners of the property located at 677 – 100th Street. Mr. Byker has requested a variance from Article 12, Section 1202 c. of the Water & Sewer Ordinance requiring copper service. Mr. Byker is requesting to install plastic service instead of copper due to the cost of over \$9,000 for a copper service.

Mr. Byker stated the owners would prefer to hook up to public water, but the excessive cost of a copper service could force them to get a well.

Jeff recommends approval if the contractor agrees to work with the BGUA with regard to materials and installation.

Brian stated that Township would prefer to have residents connect to public utilities, so it is in the Township's best interest to work with the owners.

Jeff Gritter made a motion to recommend approval to the Township Board of the request for variance from Article 12, Section 1202 c. of the Gaines Township Water & Sewer Ordinance submitted by Gary Byker for 677 – 100th Street, supported by Brian Tingley.

Discussion: None.

Ayes: All.

Nays: None.

Abstain: None.

Gary Byker was excused from the meeting at 4:05 p.m.

MOBILE HOME CONTAINMENT PROGRAM – GRAND MOBILE HOME PARK

Jeff stated that the BGUA is continuing the mobile home containment project that started last year.

Mike provided a quote for the meter structure for the Grand Mobile Home Park. He is proposing that the plumbing and excavating work be completed by BGUA staff eliminating the need to hire a contractor for these services and lowering project costs. The meter structure will be completed by a contractor.

Brian asked if the cost for plumbing and excavating could be estimated? The Board may want to know the savings will be.

Jan Boone made a motion to recommend approval of the proposal to use BGUA for excavating and plumbing services and approval of the quoted submitted by Kilgore for the meter structure, supported by Brian Tingley.

Discussion: None.

Ayes: All.

Nays: None.

Abstain: None.

Dan Van Dyke and Mike Kortman were excused from the meeting at 4:14 p.m.

INSTALLMENT PAYMENT PLAN REQUEST – 6339 WING AVENUE

Jeff presented a request for installment payment plan submitted by Mr. and Mrs. Riemersma of 6339 Wing Avenue. The Riemersmas found out on Monday that their septic system had failed. They are required to connect to sanitary sewer as stated in the Ordinance. Included with the request are amortization schedules for 10 and 15 year payment plans with current interest rates. The sewer for this area went in with M-6 and there was no payment plan offered to these residents at the time of installation.

Brian stated that he is comfortable with this request. The township doesn't want to be a bank but if requests for installment payment plans become more frequent, guidelines might be necessary.

Tim has no problem with this request since no payment plan was offered at the time of installation.

Jeff said that approving the request would allow the Township to recover costs and provide service to a customer in the Township which is the point of the utility system in the first place.

Brian Tingley made a motion to approve the payment plan request with a ten (10) year payment plan supported by Jan Boone.

Discussion: None.

Ayes: All.

Nays: None.

Abstain: None.

WAYNE STREET WATERMAIN EXTENSION

The Wayne Street Watermain project is complete.

WYOMING UPDATE

Rates are projected to go up based on the information received from the City of Wyoming. Usage has decreased significantly over the last couple of years due to the very wet and cool summers. The recession is also likely a factor in usage patterns but this is more difficult to quantify.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Jeffrey M. Gritter, P.E.
Township Engineer

**GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP
WATER & SEWER ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES ~ JULY 26, 2010**

CALL TO ORDER

A Water & Sewer Advisory Committee meeting was called to order by Tim Haagsma at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, July 26, 2010 at the Gaines Charter Township Offices located at 8555 Kalamazoo Avenue SE, Caledonia, Michigan 49316.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Brian Tingley, Tim Haagsma, Don R. Hilton, Sr., Jeff Gritter, Jan Boone
Members Absent: None
Others Present: None

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Brian Tingley made a motion to approve the May 5, 2010 minutes as written, supported by Jan Boone.

Discussion: None.
Ayes: All.
Nays: None.
Abstain: None.

VARIANCE REQUEST – 6945 KALAMAZOO AVENUE

Jeff presented a variance request submitted by contractor Jim Meek on behalf of the owners of the property located at 6945 Kalamazoo Avenue. Mr. Meek has requested a variance from Article 12, Section 1202 c. of the Water & Sewer Ordinance requiring copper water service. Mr. Meek is requesting to install polyethylene piping instead of copper due to the expense of installing over 500' of copper service. This request is almost identical to the request for 677 – 100th Street which was approved by the Township Board at their regular meeting on May 10, 2010.

Jeff Gritter made a motion to recommend approval to the Township Board of the request for variance from Article 12, Section 1202 c. of the Gaines Township Water & Sewer Ordinance submitted by Jim Meek for 6945 Kalamazoo Avenue, supported by Jan Boone.

Discussion:

Don mentioned that there are different grades of polyethylene piping available.

Jeff replied that there is a grade that meets the drinking water standards which has a thicker wall thickness.

Tim asked if the grade would be specified in the approval.

Jeff replied that the water service would still need to meet the standards and conditions of the Byron-Gaines Utility Authority, AWWA, and the State of Michigan. In addition, the water service will be inspected by the BGUA during installation.

Ayes: All.

Nays: None.

Abstain: None.

SEWER USE CHARGE REQUEST – 7179 OLD LANTERN DRIVE

Jeff presented a request for relief from sewer use charges submitted by David and Nichole Kooistra of 7179 Old Lantern Drive. The Kooistras bought a foreclosed property in August 2009. They hired an electrician to perform some work on the house. The electrician unplugged the sump pump while the work was being completed and did not plug it back in. The home has a water driven back-up sump pump which ran for an extended period of time causing a water & sewer bill in the amount of \$912.59. The water from the sump pump went into the storm sewer system instead of the sanitary sewer system. There is limited usage history as the Kooistras have only been customers of the utility system for one quarter. Based on that usage for that quarter, a refund of \$439.28 is recommended.

Tim said that he feels for the Kooistras, but the Township didn't do anything to cause this issue.

Jan said that it would be nice to give them the benefit of the doubt. This was a surprise bill.

Jeff stated that there would be no break on the water portion of the bill. The only adjustment would be to the sewer bill.

Don R. Hilton, Sr. made a motion to recommend the Township Board approve a refund in the amount of \$400.00 supported by Brian Tingley.

Discussion: None.

Ayes: All.

Nays: None.

Abstain: None.

MOBILE HOME CONTAINMENT PROGRAM – GRAND MOBILE HOME PARK

Jeff stated that Mike Kortman provided a summary of the containment project at the Grand Mobile Home Park. Mike reports that the project is basically complete and the final cost came in at less than the Board approved. The project went well as did using our own people for plumbing and excavating.

WYOMING UPDATE

Jeff stated that Byron and Gaines Townships met with the City of Wyoming a month ago to discuss the Water Supply Agreement. Initial projections show an increase of 7% however, not all of that would be passed on to our customers. A meeting to discuss the Water Cost of Service study will held in a month or so.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Tim Haagsma adjourned the meeting at 4:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Jeffrey M. Gritter, P.E.
Township Engineer

**GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP
WATER & SEWER ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES ~ OCTOBER 26, 2010**

CALL TO ORDER

A Water & Sewer Advisory Committee meeting was called to order by Tim Haagsma at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, October 26, 2010 at the Gaines Charter Township Offices located at 8555 Kalamazoo Avenue SE, Caledonia, Michigan 49316.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Brian Tingley, Tim Haagsma, Don R. Hilton, Sr., Jeff Gritter, Jan Boone
Members Absent: None
Others Present: None

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Jan Boone made a motion to approve the July 26, 2010 minutes as written, supported by Brian Tingley.

Discussion: None.
Ayes: All.
Nays: None.
Abstain: None.

UTILITY USE CHARGES REFUND REQUESTS – 6909 CRYSTAL VIEW & 7299 BRIDGE TOWN LANE

Jeff presented a request by Gerald and Janis Snyder of 6909 Crystal View Drive and Duane Miller of 7299 Bridge Town Lane. The Snyders have requested a refund of \$61.69 in sewer usage due to a faulty water driven sump pump and a broken irrigation line. Mr. Miller has requested a refund of \$163.76 due to a leak in his irrigation system. Because of the similarity of the requests, they are being presented together.

This issue of giving refunds to customers when they have a failure in the private plumbing system has been discussed by the Committee in the past. When should the Township get involved with failures in the private plumbing system? If administrative guidelines regarding these requests were established, these issues could be resolved by Staff without waiting for the next Committee meeting.

Don Hilton stated that the most recent request approved by the Committee was over \$400 and involved a contractor. Jeff added that the refund in that case was granted because the Utility Department did not incur the expense that was billed to the customer.

The current requests in front of the Committee are typically considered general homeowner maintenance issues and should be the responsibility of the homeowners.

Jan Boone made a motion to deny the requests for refund submitted by Gerald and Janis Snyder and Duane Miller, supported by Brian Tingley.

Ayes: All.

Nays: None.

Abstain: None.

UTILITY RATE STUDY

Jeff presented a rate resolution and a copy of the proposed schedule of rates and charges for water and sewer for 2011. The Inspection, Availability, Trunkage, Service Line, and Meter Fees for water are proposed to remain the same. The water use fee is proposed to increase from \$1.99 per 1,000 gallons to \$2.00 per 1,000 gallons. Water Readiness to Serve fees are proposed to increase from \$15.72 to \$16.80 per quarter; this is a proposed increase of 6.9%. Unmetered Fire Protection Fees have not increased in ten years and are proposed to increase for smaller lines. These fees are going to be included in the annual rate study and are going to be based on the 4" meter Ready to Serve fee going forward.

The Inspection, Availability, Trunkage, Service Line, and Meter Fees for sewer are also proposed to remain the same. The sewer use fee is proposed to increase from \$3.23 per 1,000 gallons to \$3.65 per 1,000 gallons. This proposed 13% increase is the biggest increase considered in this Rate Study and is due in part to a delay in increasing the sewer rate the full amount the year prior as was suggested by the previous rate study.

Overall, the average customer will see an increase of about \$7.14 per quarter if all of the proposed rate increases are approved by the Township Board.

Jeff Gritter made a motion to recommend that the Township Board approve the rate resolution as presented to the Water & Sewer Committee, supported by Jan Boone.

Discussion: None.

Ayes: All.

Nays: None.

Abstain: None.

Brian Tingley left the meeting at 4:35 p.m.

PAYMENT PLAN REQUEST – 6625 EASTERN AVENUE/LARRY DEAN

Jeff stated that Mr. Larry Dean had submitted a request for payment plan to the Committee in February, 2010. Mr. Dean's septic system is failing and he needs to connect to the sanitary sewer but has limited income and has requested to participate in the installment payment plan. At the February meeting the Committee requested some additional information and Mr. Dean

has followed through with this. Unfortunately, he still finds himself in need to make the same request of the Committee.

Don Hilton made a motion to approve Mr. Dean's request for installment payment plan using the current rate of interest as presented, supported by Jan Boone.

Discussion: None.

Ayes: All.

Nays: None.

Abstain: None.

OVERSIZING COSTS – 64TH STREET WATERMAIN

Jeff stated that Byron Township had submitted an invoice for Gaines' portion of the cost of oversizing the 64th Street watermain. This is just being presented as information and final approval for payment will be requested of the Township Board.

WATERY SUPPLY AGREEMENT / WATER COST OF SERVICE STUDY

Jeff stated that the water supply agreement with Wyoming continues to be reviewed. The process started in 2004 but has been a long term issue to deal with. The Agreement itself is relatively straight forward and is similar to the recently signed Sewer Agreement. The concern that has been raised is with the methodology used to assign rates. The methodology is quite complicated due to all the communities served by the Wyoming system and before making a recommendation to the Township Board for approval Staff would like to make sure that they have a good understanding of the rate calculation methodology.

CALEDONIA TOWNSHIP CONNECTION

Jeff stated that Caledonia Township has been having discussions about sewer capacity and treatment and they are anticipating reaching capacity with their current system in the not so distant future. Jeff has been approached about making use of a part of the Gaines Township system to meet their need. Caledonia has been presented with some options for possible connections to the Gaines System. Caledonia has also had some brief discussions with Grand Rapids about this issue and we have not had any further discussions at this point in time.

Tim Haagsma asked if we could supply them?

Jeff Gritter replied that he hasn't requested that Rod due the extensive engineering research of the question because he didn't want the Township to incur the expense if Caledonia isn't serious about connecting. He expects that we could support a connection from them for 10-15 years or even longer but is not sure about the very long term. We have excess capacity in that area due to a lack of development on Steelcase property but we need to be careful not to cut ourselves out of capacity by serving our neighbor. We also need to keep our current sewer agreement in place as it provides us with the best deal for sewer service presently.

GRAND RAPIDS

Jeff Gritter stated that the City of Grand Rapids updated their sewer ordinance and, by agreement, Gaines Township is required to adopt the same provisions. This update is relatively minor and will be presented to the Township Board for approval once it has been prepared.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Tim Haagsma adjourned the meeting at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Jeffrey M. Gritter, P.E.
Township Engineer