

**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