

**GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP  
WATER & SEWER ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES ~ August 27, 2013**

**CALL TO ORDER**

A Water & Sewer Advisory Committee meeting was called to order by Chair Tim Haagsma at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, August 27, 2013 at the Gaines Charter Township (GCT) Offices located at 8555 Kalamazoo Avenue SE, Caledonia, Michigan 49316.

**ROLL CALL**

**Members Present:** Jan Boone, Jeff Gritter, Tim Haagsma, Don R. Hilton, Sr.  
**Members Absent:** None  
**Others Present:** Mr. Matthew Vogel, 593 76<sup>th</sup> Street

**APPROVAL OF MAY 20, 2013 MINUTES:**

**MOTION:** By Don Hilton to approve the minutes for the May 20, 2013 Water & Sewer Advisory Committee meeting as presented, supported by Jan Boone.  
**YES:** Jan Boone, Jeff Gritter, Tim Haagsma, Don R. Hilton, Sr.  
**NO:** None  
**ABSTAIN:** None  
**MOTION:** Passed

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None

**CURRENT MATTERS:**

**a. Variance Request – 593 76<sup>th</sup> Street**

Engineer Gritter stated Mr. & Mrs. Vogel submitted a letter requesting a variance to connect their home (593 76<sup>th</sup> Street) and apartment (595 76<sup>th</sup> Street) to the same water service. The property is comprised of a 1.4 acre parcel or 60,984 square feet. The house is on the south side of the property and is closest to 76<sup>th</sup> Street. A garage is located to the north, and an apartment which is approximately 720 square feet is located above the garage. The home and the apartment / garage are connected by an underground walkway, but there is not a direct connection above ground between the home and the apartment. Each structure has separate sewer connections.

Gritter reviewed the four standards by which this request is to be reviewed as stated in Article 5, Section 502 of the Ordinance:

- 1.) Strict application of this Ordinance would cause undue hardship;
- 2.) There are special circumstances applicable to the property in question which are not applicable to a significant number of other properties;

- 3.) The hardship does not result from the applicant's own actions; and
- 4.) A variance would be consistent with the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and it would not be contrary to the public health and safety.

In response to the four standards,

- 1.) Strict application will not cause undue hardship.
- 2.) This alone is not a special circumstance that would prevent the connection.
- 3.) The current condition predates the Vogel's ownership.
- 4.) A variance would not be consistent with the intent of the Ordinance. Public health and safety is not in question. Jeff Gritter stated that at this time, all monies have been paid to the Township to connect to the water service for both living units. There are two water services already in place for the property; probably in anticipation of both the house and the apartment needing separate connections at some point in the future. Two meter fees, two water service fees, two trunkage fees and the availability fee based on the frontage of the property have all been paid in full.

Jeff Gritter commented that if the Vogel's request for a variance was granted, the second water service would need to be abandoned at the Vogel's expense in accordance with the Township Water and Sewer Ordinance. The expense of removing the water service would be similar to that of running a separate water service to the apartment.

Chair Haagsma asked for questions or comments. Mr. Vogel stated he was told the properties cannot be separated due to proximity and inability to meet setbacks standards, per David Waligora on August 2, 2013. Mr. Vogel stated they had paid for two meters, but have only one well meter in their possession. When they purchased the property, only one meter horn was present. Jan Boone thought that was for the apartment. Mr. Vogel believes the unused side has been capped off.

Mr. Vogel and the Township are unsure of how long or far the pipe extends through the wall. Mr. Vogel stated that along the driveway halfway between the road and the house, two capped PVC pipes exist. Behind the garage, there is another capped PVC pipe. Jeff Gritter stated that when the sewer lateral changes direction, a "clean-out" is installed to provide access for cleaning and maintenance purposes.

Jeff Gritter commented that there are several questions to be answered and to get them may require digging and inspecting. All assume the lines were installed and able to be used upon activation. However, the Township is unsure if they were connected or capped.

Mr. Vogel said they intend to leave the well active to use for outdoor watering. Mr. Vogel is looking for one meter to service both properties.

Don Hilton stated he felt there were too many unknowns at this point. Jeff Gritter stated that normally, the Township knows when residents are installing a water service, *but*, it could have happened without the knowledge of the Township in this case. The pipe could be in good condition or it might not be. Jeff Gritter also stated that if the variance is granted, the separate billings would need to be combined. By not having separate meters, usage is unknown for the properties.

Jeff Gritter indicated Mr. Vogel would need to complete the water service installation work, and to have it inspected by the Byron Gaines Utility Authority. Mr. Vogel should note that permits will need to be acquired, also at his expense.

Jeff Gritter stated the Township needs to review historical records to determine what is recorded for this property. Jeff Gritter will have the stop boxes located in the next several days. When they are located, they will be painted blue.

**MOTION:** By Jeff Gritter, to table the request for a variance, supported by Don Hilton.  
**YES:** Jan Boone, Jeff Gritter, Tim Haagsma, Don R. Hilton, Sr.  
**NO:** None  
**ABSTAIN:** None  
**MOTION:** Passed

**b. Brookshire MHP – Containment Improvements – Reimbursement Requests**

Chair Haagsma asked Jeff Gritter to review this agenda item. Engineer Gritter stated that water heaters were inadvertently drained and damaged as the work to contain the private water system from the public water system was completed at Brookshire Mobile Home Park. The water valves had not been installed within Brookshire MHP to allow for isolation of their private water system while the BGUA was doing the containment work. As the Township initiated the work and the BGUA was performing the work, Jeff Gritter is making a recommendation to compensate the three homeowners at a total cost of \$562.54.

The containment project was completed at the end of July and it appears that these three water heaters are the only claims of damage that will be submitted. We have not heard from anyone else at this time claiming damages. Jeff Gritter noted that a new valve has been installed which will allow the water to be turned off at the water meter to avoid a similar occurrence in the future. The lack of valves on the private water system will be the responsibility of Brookshire MHP going forward.

**MOTION:** By Don Hilton to recommend the reimbursement of the cost of the water heaters to each of the three homeowners. Supported by Jan Boone.

**ROLL CALL VOTE**

**YES:** Jan Boone, Jeff Gritter, Tim Haagsma, Don R. Hilton, Sr.  
**NO:** None  
**ABSTAIN:** None  
**MOTION:** Passed

**c. City of Grand Rapids – 2013 Sewer Use Ordinance Updates**

Chair Haagsma asked Jeff Gritter to introduce this item to the committee. Jeff Gritter stated that review of this item by the Township Attorney had been delayed due to a personal family matter. The original document had been sent to Mr. White to review and Mr. White will prepare a draft resolution to present to the Township Board.

Jeff Gritter stated that the City of Grand Rapids implemented changes in the document in December, 2012 and the City Commission adopted them in April, 2013. Jeff Gritter stated that the changes are minor in nature. The attorney is confirming that we are adopting the correct changes with the City. Jeff stated that the proposed resolution to adopt the changes to the Sewer Use Ordinance or Appendix E should be ready for the September 9, 2013 Township Board meeting. It was determined that if the document arrives in time to be included in September business for the Board, that it be submitted for approval.

**MOTION:** By Jan Boone to submit the 2013 Sewer Use Ordinance Update for Township Board approval at the September 9, 2013 meeting. Supported by Jeff Gritter.  
**YES:** Jan Boone, Jeff Gritter, Tim Haagsma, Don R. Hilton, Sr.  
**NO:** None  
**ABSTAIN:** None  
**MOTION:** Passed

**d. Dutton Industrial Drive Watermain Improvements - Appraisal**

Jeff Gritter updated the Committee on the efforts to obtain a watermain easement for properties on Dutton Industrial Drive. An appraisal was received from Maturen & Associates, Inc. July 17, 2013.

The property appraised is owned by VanDellen Steel, Inc. located at 6945 Dutton Industrial Drive.

The purpose of the appraisal is to determine a value by which the Township would offer Van Dellen Steel, Inc. payment to purchase on easement to allow for the installation of a watermain down the full length of Dutton Industrial Drive.

The appraisal returned by Maturen & Associates was very high and used the "Sales Comparison Approach". Mr. Jim White in a discussion with Jeff Gritter, suggested that title work be completed to determine the private road agreement for all easements on the private road. Mr. VanDellen owns the property where the road is located, but other businesses may influence to whom easements are granted. Mr. White also stated that the appraisal, while not incorrect, does not give full credit to the other utility easements that are already in place.

Jeff Gritter stated he feels the title work should be completed to gain any additional information that is available about this property. If new information becomes available it may have an effect on the appraisal and help the Township keeps its costs at a reasonable level. Don Hilton agreed with Jeff Gritter. Don Hilton stated it would be nice to know what obstacles stand in the way of a clear title.

Tim Haagsma stated that he feels it is really important to continue to pursue the installation of watermain in this private road to further encourage industrial development in the area, to improve fire protection and to improve property values. He stated that these are all positives for the Township and the property owners.

**MOTION:** By Don Hilton to have Jeff Gritter pursue title work and continue to pursue the watermain easement in Dutton Industrial Drive. Supported by Jan Boone.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

**YES:** Jan Boone, Jeff Gritter, Tim Haagsma, Don R. Hilton, Sr.  
**NO:** None  
**ABSTAIN:** None  
**MOTION:** Passed

**OTHER MATTERS:**

Don Hilton asked what has happened with Caledonia and their request to connect to the Township sanitary sewer system. Jeff Gritter stated that Caledonia has been negotiating with the City of Grand Rapids for the past 6 months. Jim White is working to complete this agreement and it appears to be close to finished according to Mr. White. The next step once this is completed will be an agreement between Caledonia Township, Gaines Township and Byron Township. This should happen over the winter months and then actual construction work will take place in 2014.

Don Hilton stated he wants to make sure there is adequate capacity for the future development of properties in Gaines Township. Jeff Gritter stated this issue was studied by Rod Korhorn from Vriesman & Korhorn and a determination was made that there is more than adequate room to accommodate Caledonia Township as well as continued development of Gaines Township properties. Existing Gaines Township sewer lines have a physical capacity of approximately 4 million gallons per day and we are currently using less than 500,000 gallons per day. At full development it is expected that Gaines Township would need capacity of slightly less than 1 MGD. Caledonia is expected to request about 1 to 2 MGD maximum capacity. So even at full development Gaines Township would have in reserve approximately 25% capacity in the existing 18 inch sewer.

Jeff Gritter gave a further update for activities in Byron Township. The Byron Township Board has approved utility extensions for the M-6 / Wilson interchange. Construction on the sewer system improvements has started this summer. Byron Township recently closed on the property for the new connection to the Wyoming water transmission main. The plan is to make this connection this winter to allow watermains to begin serving the area in the next year or so. This property does include an unoccupied farmhouse and barn. The plans are to demolish the buildings in the future and retain the entire property for utility system uses. The barn is in disrepair to the point that it is a hazard, the house is in better condition, but they both need to come down. BGUA has been mowing the front lawn over the summer.

The meter replacement project at BG2 or the Burlingame meter station is going to be completed this fall or winter.

Don Hilton inquired about the future plan for Division Ave where buildings were recently removed between 92<sup>nd</sup> and 100<sup>th</sup> Streets. Jeff Gritter said the buildings had been demolished and the property they were on was rezoned to industrial but the Byron Township Planning Commission has had no specific site plan requests at this point in time.

Jeff Gritter also stated that the Tanger Outlet Mall is still pending as open issues are being resolved. The developers have indicated that if their application is approved they will start construction immediately. This development may increase other development activity in the area of 84<sup>th</sup> Street and Division Avenue and the Township may want to make some utility improvements to anticipate some this activity.

Jeff Gritter stated that we have an unhappy customer; Mrs. Sue VanderMolen at 7299 Sundale Drive regarding a recent utility bill. A new meter was installed at her home and Mrs. VanderMolen felt it was not accurate. The old meter was bench tested and found to be accurate and therefore the bill was also accurate. Jeff Gritter stated that he has sent Mrs. VanderMolen a letter along with her historical usage documents show a consistent pattern of utility use over several years. Mrs. VanderMolen has been very aggressive with staff in the Water & Sewer Department and Jeff stated that she has hung up on him several times as he is trying to discuss her bill with her.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

*Chair Haagsma adjourned the meeting at 4:44 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted:

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Jeffrey M. Gritter, P.E.  
Township Engineer