

Resident Comments on Sewer: To date 8/10/21 11:00 AM

It was good news to read in the letter sent out 7/16/21 that you were able to slog through all the conversations, concerns and survey results to come up with an affordable plan for the sewer expansion project. I truly look forward to the project moving forward asap.

Leslie Lance
2084 Little Meadow Pass

Dear Ms. Heiny-Cogswell,

I am writing this morning to comment on the letter to residents dated July 16, 2021 regarding an update on the Oshtemo Township Sanitary Sewer Construction Projects.

I have lived in the Westport neighborhood for the past 15 years. We bought our home here knowing we had a septic system and understood the maintenance such a system would require in terms of additional investment.

Over the past year I joined hundreds of my neighbors in the effort to stop the expansion of the sewer system in our neighborhood. With the vote last fall I expected that would be the end of the system expansion plans for our neighborhood. It appears from the letter that is not the case.

I know part of the effort by residents was in objection to cost to homeowners of the expansion, however, many of my neighbors feel the same as I that we do not need or want a sewer expansion in our neighborhood. I would ask that you and the board listen to what your constituents are saying and act in accordance with their wishes.

Thank you for your time.

Kyle J. Dekema
2476 Chippendale Dr.
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

I don't think it's reasonable to make homeowners put a lien on their property in order to fund sewers. I plan to sell in the next couple of years, and having a lien on my property will complicate things and not make it any easier to sell my house.

I would think the board should be required to test septic tanks and get some data instead of just saying the septic tanks are old and leaky without proof.

Janine Kennedy
7225 Oak Highlands Drive
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

Public Works Dept. (& Libby and Porter)

After looking at the Oshtemo township sewer map, I noticed some highly concentrated areas where the sewer pipes run right past some of these. From the townships own concerns about the quality of

drinking water, shouldn't these areas be connected to sewer? Two of these stand out as N and W of 131 and M43, and E and S of 131 and M43. So, I would like to know if streets like Bunker Hill Drive, Winddrift Ave, Promenade Drive and Skyridge Ave are in future phases of the sewer project?

Tom Salamun

On behalf of those of us homeowners who have already connected to the sewer, there needs to be no tax raising or other such costs required by US homeowners to cover the cost for those home owners that have not connected. I'm also fine with letting those who still need to connect get to vote on how they want to pay for their hook up, but those options should not include my tax dollars helping them out while the rest of us never got any help.

Lisa Kerchenfaut

Dear Oshtemo Township Board,

We, my boyfriend Ryan and I, currently live on Winddrift Ave. We are appalled by the behavior of this board. First, the people of your township stopped the sewer expansion by asking for a vote. Then, a majority of your residents made their voices heard by voting it down. Now, you are refusing to accept your defeat and are once again ignoring our voices and pushing through your agenda.

We refuse to be forced to hook up to something we don't need, while also being forced to pay for it, regardless of the cost. Kalamazoo County residents aren't forced to hook up to sewer. Why should we?

I certainly hope you come to your senses and listen to your constituents. History proves you probably won't. Therefore, we look forward to the next election season so we can continue to vote for people who have OUR interest at heart.

Sincerely,
Cari Miller and Ryan Croak

Libby,

Thank you for your response.

I will not be representing multiple people, only my own views. I'll try to keep them under 4 minutes.

I don't remember any discussion in the ORA about not meeting with you. It may have been a directive from their lawyer that I am unaware of. Of course once the lawsuit was filed, the township stopped replying to FOIA requests from people it believed were part of the lawsuit, which is the township's legal right to do. Although I shared my opinions with several friends in the ORA, I have always been denied membership. I was quite surprised when my own FOIA requests stopped being answered due to the

township's perception that I was part of the suit. To this day I believe you would not respond to a FOIA request from me if it had anything to do with the sewer. Am I wrong?

Misunderstandings breed contempt without open communication. I sincerely wish we could all get past the initial conflict and try to work together.

This is the first time I've ever heard that the CIC is open to the public. Looking at the description of the CIC on the website it doesn't mention the composition of the committee as the rest of the committees do. As you know, I've applied for any committee membership to become more informed and engaged but have been consistently denied. I suspect the denial has been because of my involvement with the ORA or my opposition to the way the sewer project was implemented.

I have a strong objection to the board voting to publish the notice of intent to issue bonds on Tuesday because it is my impression that the township has once again left the public out of the process leading up to this decision. The sewer survey's multiple choice answers only presented answers that the creator of the survey thought appropriate, thereby skewing the survey toward those answers. A more effective survey would have interviewed residents who were for and against the sewer project, specifically it should have interviewed a representative of the ORA and then surveyed all residents with multiple choice answers that reflected a broader spectrum of answers. So although the survey showed a majority of residents did think it cost too much, it did not adequately reflect the more prominent reasons people were motivated to petition and vote against it. Your efforts to reduce the cost of the sewer are greatly appreciated by all but you have not addressed the key issues. 1) the taking of a valuable asset (working septic system) without compensation. I'm not saying that this is an unlawful taking, but it is a taking none-the-less. 2) the requirement to connect without proof of septic failure 3) the requirement to pay for something you truly don't need because your septic works fine. 4) the requirement to pay in excess of \$10,000 (sometimes in excess of \$20,000) for something that is not going to raise the value of your property. 5) the vehement opposition to reasonable compromise.

A reasonable compromise would be requiring the residents to pay for the availability of the sewer, requiring them to connect when their septic fails, requiring septic systems with an available line to be inspected for failure every five years and reporting the findings to the township. This compromise ensures the continued expansion of the sewer, it protects the environment by requiring septic systems to be pumped more frequently, it introduces a 3rd party to determine septic failure with objective measures, and finally it doesn't take a valuable asset from the resident, when the septic system fails it becomes a value-less asset.

If someone is willing to pay \$1000 every 5 years to have their septic tank pumped and inspected instead of paying how much their specific property will cost to connect, then it should be their choice to do so. No one appreciates being treated like children and having choices taken away. I gave Cheri an example of what you're doing in different terms and it went like this. Imagine you purchased a car and 6 years later the car was paid off and you expected to drive that thing till it dropped. Then the government came to your home, crushed your car and set it on your lawn and told you that you were now required to purchase a new electric car because your old one burned gasoline and was harming the environment. This is exactly what you are doing with the sewer. You aren't giving anyone a choice, you are being a bully.

I hope that you have not taken offense at this email as it was intended to be nothing but constructive.
Tom

As I consider to try to figure out the thought process (or lack thereof) of this township as regards the mandatory sewer hookup assessment charges, I keep coming back to the following:

If you (the township) are voting to reduce/decrease the connection fees/assessments for future sewer connection phases to \$5,000.00, why are you t NOT only keeping the existing (non-supported by any documentation) rates for the Group of 300 at the extortionary 2018 rates but also threatening an increase of 57% to anyone in this group if they are not in the process of being connected by EOB 08.31.2021? Will these rate increases also apply to any of the future phases that do not connect by their connection dates? Will these increased rates actually apply to anyone other than the Group of 300?

Is this what the board means by diversity?

Also Libby, as you may recall during one of your neighborhood meetings for the sewer expansion, you said people who did not want to pay were "freeloaders". As you have identified as one who will be impacted by future phases, does this proposed decrease in your connection fee kind of make your group the same thing? Kind of freeloading off the Group of 300? Also Zack previously said "everyone must pay their fair share". Explain the fairness to the Group of 300. We not only pay higher rates, but also the road millage to pay for your sewer expansion. Fair?

I would appreciate a response.

Thank you.
Ann Bashaw

Didn't the township vote on this last November? Didn't we the people say no? Is there going to be another vote on an upcoming district ballot to approve the lower cost and purchase of bonds? Are there ever going to be tests done to prove that our septic systems are failing and causing problems with the ground water? Why aren't you holding your meetings ahead of the August 10th meeting so our voices can be heard? When are you going to have public meetings again so we can actually see everyone? Zoom meetings need to stop. Other districts are in person. What are the additional costs above the \$5,000 that will be charged by the Township Not my personal costs for hook up.

The voters of Oshtemo already said no by our vote. We also said no to sewer expansion in the survey. Why don't you give the same presentation that you gave to the Treasurer to the general public. It convinced her. Now convince us!

I would like a response to these questions before the meeting on the 10th. Thank you.

Mary Ann

Hello,

Is our property at 6312 West Main Street also eligible for the 56.5% connection fee reduction that the Phase I and Phase II property owners were informed of?

If no, please advise as to what benefit we are receiving that the Phase I and II property owners are not receiving and what additional costs were incurred by the township for our property's sewer system versus the Phase I and II properties.

Additionally, we have requested on three separate occasions information regarding installation of the sewer system and lines that our property at 6312 West Main Street is to connect to. Specifically, when were the lines installed? Who installed them?

Can someone please assist with this information?

Thank you.

Mark Szatkowski

Anna,

Thank you for the quick response. However, I am confused why we, like many others who already have a pipe in front of our property, are being charged such a high amount, \$14,000, that then increases by 57% to \$22,000 in one day? How was this new amount figured out? How was the old amount figured out?

Also, that pipe has been in the ground for at least 30 years, and the township can't/won't tell me how much that pipe cost to install? Additionally, according to the press release from yesterday, those who will hook up to the sewer in the future, and do not even have a pipe to connect to, will only pay roughly a \$5,000 connection fee? Where is the logic for that? I want you to understand this is a huge financial burden to us, and I am having a hard time wrapping my arms around this cost. (\$14,000 for the assessment, approximately 6,500 for private connection, and 5,000 to 7,000 for tree removal)

Sincerely,

Tom

This really is the project that will not die!!! On the one and only real opportunity to be heard on this subject, the voters resoundingly defeated the last version of this scheme. Are you incapable of taking no for an answer? To continue to press ahead with this unpopular project without demonstrating a need for it, and to do it in the same unaccountable fashion shows you are not listening to the concerns of people in the township. During these difficult times when we have more pressing concerns like a deadly virus, an economic collapse and a bitterly divided nation which has lost its faith in government, our local officials should be trying to ease the burdens on citizens and earn back their trust.

Instead you seem to be repeating the failed strategy of the last version. A project which once again is being pushed through without consulting those effected or asking for their approval and consent will likely get the same reception.

The significant expense to individual property holders, the mandatory hookups, the extra costs of excavation from the house to the sewer line, additional monthly bills to use the system most of us do not need and the threat of placing liens on property were all featured in the rejected proposal. Why are they still being pursued? Public comment may be "encouraged" but in the meeting I attended for the

last go round it was clear this was not being taken seriously. Questions were not answered. Concerns were not acknowledged or addressed. It was clear that decisions had already been made and comment after the fact (instead of input before commitments were made and bills sent out) was useless. It is essential that this newest scheme and the financial hardships it would impose be taken seriously. It must be brought to a vote and approved by those impacted before any bonds or loans are entered into. The deliberate avoidance of seeking approval and consent and the lack of opportunity to opt out made the sewer project unacceptable to voters the last time. Have you learned nothing from that defeat? We need public officials to remember that their work depends on the "consent of the governed." Do not present us with another done deal and tell us there is nothing we can do about it.

Nancy Calloway
1341 Bunkerhill Drive

To Whom It May Concern:

2020 was a difficult year for a lot of people for a lot of reasons. A big thing for my wife and myself, and a lot of other Oshtemo residents, was the full on assault by the Township Board relating to pushing their sewer project down the throats of the local residents. I started attending meetings to find out what was going on and why as it related to the sewer project. It became painfully obvious that the Oshtemo Board cared little, if any, about what the people felt and how their decision(s) were going to affect an awful lot of people. Time and time again it was reiterated, "We're not here to answer any questions, we're just here to listen to what you have to say". After looking down their noses at the people they supposedly represented and totally dismissing any story told about how their decision(s) were going to cause incredible hardships to all the residents that were at the meetings, the residents were left no alternative but to establish the Oshtemo Residents Association. The cost of this to the residents was in excess of \$150,000.

After going through the headache and heartache of getting a resident's association up and running, the unnecessary chore of getting this whole thing resolved was just starting. A long, hot summer of slugging through the streets of the Oshtemo Township neighborhoods talking to our neighbors and explaining the sleight of hand that was being perpetrated on the Oshtemo residents, we obtained **more than enough** signatures to have this fiasco put on the November ballot for a community vote. You people, the Board Members, have no idea what you needlessly put your neighbors through just to push forward your unknown, hidden agenda (eg. ultimately elevating Oshtemo Township to a "City" status, etc.).

Then, ultimately, on November 3, 2020 the people told you what they thought of your plan(s); a 2 to 1 trouncing of your plan to ramrod through a sewer plan that no-one wanted, no-one could afford **and was 100% unnecessary!**

Thank God the fight was over. Ah.....not so quick. On July 16, 2021 the Devil reared its ugly head one more time. An opportunity for us residents to take a survey and give our input about the "Reinvigorated Mystical Sewer Project". We are given a short timeframe to fill out an online survey and give our opinions. So, being good residents we comply and imagine that, the results are a virtual carbon copy of the results from the November 3rd election; 62% of the respondents (that would be roughly 2/3 or a 2 to 1 margin) said they don't want the sewer project to move forward. Again, thank God the fight is over!

But...the supreme Oshtemo Board, in their infinite wisdom, is undeterred concerning what the residents of Oshtemo Township want as it relates to the Sewer Project; they know best.

Finally, a letter is sent to the residents of Oshtemo Township on Jul 16, 2021 informing the peons that the Oshtemo Township Board will inform them what the Board edict is on all things concerning the Sewer Project on July 27th and August 10th.

You guys just don't get it!

- There is absolutely no justification for embarking on a sewer plant expansion project. No evidence has come forward substantiating that the residents' septic systems are creating a health risk.
- The residents don't want it due to financial and personal reasons and don't need it.

You believe that this whole thing has been voted down and hated because you didn't have it structured properly. That couldn't be further from the truth. If you would have listened the last time it was voted down because: 1) you couldn't show any justification for it. Our systems weren't failing, period, 2) Our systems were/are working fine and 3) no one wants to spend their retirement money for a system that isn't needed.

Do all of us a favor and drop this whole thing and don't bother us again with any future permutations.

IF YOU PLAN ON MOVING FORWARD WITH THIS PROJECT I AM DEMANDING IT BE PUT TO A COMMUNITY VOTE PRIOR TO ANY COMMITMENTS!!!!!!

Regards,

Jerry M. Jones

Please note that the text size of this letter was reduced but all respective formatting remained