

APPROVED MINUTES  
WATKINS CITY COUNCIL  
PUBLIC HEARING  
THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2022

Mayor Rowan called the public hearing to order at 7 p.m. at City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Chris Rowan, Tootz Tschumperlin, Brenda Carlson

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sue Unterberger, Marc Wirz

Others: Steve Geislinger, Kent Louwagie, Jody Bauer, Duane Peterson, Deputy Sandstrom, Jeff Hilsgen, Jason Hemp, Tony Faber, Clerk Deb Kramer

Purpose of the hearing was to consider potential improvements to the municipal wastewater system. Improvement options that are being considered include replacement of the main lift station and forcemain.

City Engineer Kent Louwagie presented information on the proposed project to replace the lift station and forcemain going out to the wastewater treatment ponds. There is a need for the project as the city is experiencing frequent failures in the main lift station and forcemain. The main lift station was constructed in 1982 and consists of a wet well for raw wastewater and a dry well for centrifugal pumps and valves. The wet well is an 8' diameter, 20' deep concrete structure, while the dry well is a Smith & Loveless 'tin can' with a 10.5' diameter. The wet well is showing obvious signs of weathering and deterioration. The dry well appears to be weeping ground water at the base of the structure. The lift station pumps and piping, as well as the lift station controls, were replaced in 2004. The pumps and check valves have required significant maintenance over the last several years. There is an existing propane fueled standby generator on site, installed in 1982. The generator has not been problematic, but is nearing the end of its useful life.

The original control building, which was decommissioned when the lift station was built, still exists just south of the lift station. The roof is failing and groundwater is constantly present in the lower level. This structure presents a safety concern. A large mound of earth to the east of the building covers an abandoned slurry tank. The north fork of County Ditch 20 passes through the site, generally along the north and west sides of the parcel.

The existing forcemain, constructed in 1982, is a 10-inch diameter ductile iron pipe that extends east from the lift station along the south side of TH 55, then north along the section line and 677<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the treatment ponds. The forcemain is about 3.5 miles long. The forcemain has failed about five times over the last 10-15 years. The concrete control structure at the wastewater treatment ponds also needs replacement.

The wastewater flows from 2015 through 2020 were evaluated. The flow has been relatively consistent over that six-year period, with daily maximum flows approaching or exceeding the pump capacity two times. May 2015 was the only month the pump capacity was exceeded. The proposed design criteria are the same as the existing with a total dynamic head of 190 feet and flow capacity of 530 gallons per minute.

Three alternatives are proposed for lift station improvements:

1. Complete design and replacement of the lift station with new wet well, submersible pumps and valve/meter vault.
2. Utilize existing wet well structure, install submersible pumps, construct valve/meter vault.
3. Rehabilitate existing structures and replace dry well pumps.

The following recommended improvements are included in all three options:

- Demolish and remove the abandoned control building
- Replace all lift station process piping, valves, electrical and control panels
- Replace the backup generator
- Replace the entire forcemain
- Replace the pond control structures

The following chart shows estimates of each alternative:

	Lift Station	Forcemain	Total
Alternative 1	\$1,067,040	\$2,122,610	\$3,189,650
Alternative 2	\$911,520	\$2,122,610	\$3,034,130
Alternative 3	\$777,600	\$2,122,610	\$2,900,210

Alternative 1 has the highest initial cost but will have the lowest lifetime costs. Alternative 2 could utilize parts of the existing lift station infrastructure but has a high initial cost. Alternative 3 has the lowest initial cost but would have the highest lifetime costs.

The engineer's recommended course of action is to proceed with Alternative 1. Completely replacing the lift station and forcemain would provide the city with an updated long-term solution to pump wastewater to the wastewater treatment ponds.

Councilor Carlson questioned the recommendation to go with the same size rather than upgrading for potential growth of the city. Kent noted the same design parameters should be able to accommodate city growth. The city only exceeded the pumping capacity twice from 2015 through 2020. Public Works Director Steve Geislinger noted that was due to flooding. One time was from a 3-inch rainfall.

Councilor Carlson didn't feel it paid to keep putting band aids on. Councilor Tschumperlin felt it was best to replace all of it. Geislinger noted it was getting to a point where contractors don't want to go down in the 'can'. If it were submersible, everything could be done from the top. He noted the 'can' was not very safe.

Mayor Rowan opened the floor for public comment. Jeff Hilsgen asked if the estimates include the cost of rising prices. Kent noted yes, to the best of their ability to predict it. The estimates were put together last summer. Kent noted the public hearing was being held now so the city can apply for Public Facility Authority (PFA) funding and get on the Project Priority List (PPL). In May the city would make an application to get on the Intended Use Plan (IUP). Kent noted this is basically a letter to let the state know the city intends to move forward with the project. In September/October, PFA would release the IUP list. If the city is in the fundable range, the city would decide if it's going to proceed. If it proceeds, plans and specs would be drawn up for 2023 construction.

There being no further comments/questions, Mayor Rowan closed the public comment period.

MOTION BY TSCHUMPERLIN TO ADJOURN, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Submitted by

Deb Kramer  
Clerk

ATTEST:

Chris Rowan  
Mayor