

**Twin Lakes Township Water Distribution System Project
Special Board Meeting and Public Assessment Hearing
Thursday, July 15, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.
Carlton County Transportation Building, Carlton, MN**

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Diane Felde-Finke at 6:00 p.m. Felde-Finke introduced Supervisor Randy Willie, Clerk Sue Chapin, Supervisor John Vernon, Treasurer Ginny Vernon, Town Attorney Troy Gilchrist, Jessica Cooke with Ehlers, Engineer David Bolf with Northern Consulting Engineers, and Derek Wolf with the City of Carlton.

Gilchrist gave an overview of the agenda for tonight's meeting and hearing.

The public improvement hearing happened a few months ago, and the board moved forward with the project, obtained bids, and awarded the contracts. Tonight's assessment hearing focuses on the assessments proposed for properties, and formal objections need to be made in writing tonight. Gilchrist stated that the town board has worked extremely hard on the water line project, and it is remarkable that they got the state funding. They are working cooperatively with the city of Carlton.

Cooke spoke about Ehlers role in this project. They helped figure out how the township could pay for its portion of the project that was not covered by the state funding. Bonds were issued for that portion. She explained that a water utility is not paid for by taxes but supported by the people it will serve. Assessments and user charges are the two sources of revenue. The proposed assessment amount is \$3,015 per WAC unit, and if paying in installments, those payments would begin showing up on property tax statements in 2022. However, within 30 days of the assessment roll being approved, the full assessment may be paid off without interest. If it is paid in installments on property taxes, it would be over a 20-year period with 4% interest, and the annual payment on the \$3,015 assessment is \$221.85. Property owners are responsible for paying for their private service line, in-home plumbing, and well abandonment.

Operating the system will be paid for with monthly water rates which have two components - a fixed charge of \$14.35 and a volumetric charge of \$7.20 per 1,000 gallons used. Most of the volumetric charge will pay for purchasing the water from Carlton.

Felde-Finke spoke about a program being developed by Carlton County Economic Development, which would offer low-interest loans to property owners to assist with their private hook-ups. More information will be coming out.

Felde-Finke opened the Public Hearing.

Question: Where will hydrants be located?

Answer: That information is available from the engineers on-site.

Question: Who will read the meters?

Answer: The City of Carlton will, using radio frequency, as per maintenance contract with the township.

Question: Where will shut-off valves be located for properties?

Answer: Adjacent with existing wells, to keep private hook-ups as short as possible.

Question: Can the construction people estimate costs for private hook-ups?

Answer: No, they would not do an estimate like that. The current cost estimate range is anywhere from \$3,000 to \$10,000, but it will depend on each individual property. Bolf said a plumber will help determine where the line will come into the house.

Question: Who maintains the hydrants?

Answer: The City of Carlton will, as per maintenance contract with the township.

Question: Does everyone have to hook up?

Answer: Yes, within 12 months from when water is made available to you. Assuming for some reason you can't get it done within 12 months, let the town board know and ask for a continuance. Hook-ups will be rolled out as the line moves out of Carlton, is tested, and is ready for service.

Question: Is Heidelberg going to be hooked up in this part of the project?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Can wells still be used for watering?

Answer: Yes, they may be kept for that purpose, but can't be connected to the house.

Question: How were commercial assessments determined?

Answer: They were based on current sewer charges and estimated water use.

Question: Why do I have to hook up if I'm happy with my well?

Answer: In order to put in the line and make it affordable for everyone, everyone needs to be hooked up to the line and paying their monthly charge, needed for operating costs. The township can take action to force people to hook up.

Statement: The fire protection being provided now is a big deal. Wolf added that with the hydrants, people's insurance rating will be better.

Question: At what point should we contact a contractor?

Answer: As soon as you want to, to get on their list. A lot of the system should be up and operational by this October – Olsonville and 210. Schmitz Road will be dependent on the booster station construction.

Question: Can we pay the assessment up front?

Answer: Yes, a check can be written to the township and sent to the clerk. Information will be sent out on how to do that.

Question: Could someone who has a long private connection to make hire the contractor themselves to bore that?

Answer: Yes, but the owner would have to hire that contractor, it would not be through the township contract. You would still need a plumber to get the service into the house.

Question: Does a person have to get a permit for the connection?

Answer: Yes, and typically the licensed plumber would obtain that permit from the township.

Discussion on vacant lot assessments. Gilchrist explained that instead of assessing vacant lots and then deferring the assessment as was discussed at the improvement hearing, there is just no assessment on vacant lots. Instead, if the lot is developed, there would be a connection fee of \$3,015.

Question: If we bought two homes near us that are not occupied, would we have to pay for hook-up?

Answer: Yes, it doesn't matter if a home is occupied or not, hook-up is required and monthly charges apply.

Question: How will we know when we can hook up?

Answer: As the project progresses, NCE will be making a recommendation to the township to take over ownership and maintenance of that section of pipe. Once the board accepts that portion of pipe, then people will be notified.

Statement: Bolf mentioned that people should talk to their neighbors and try to get a group rate from a contractor.

Question: Can the county get a written guarantee that there would be no other charges besides their assessments?

Answer: Gilchrist stated that if there's a specific issue, he can work with the township and the county to come up with something.

Question: Where exactly does Carlton get its water?

Answer: Wolf explained that there are two wells in South Terrace; one is brand new, one is from 2008.

Question: What about contamination from Chemstar?

Answer: The aquifer comes from the south. Chemstar makes environmentally friendly products, but nothing in the area of Chemstar would affect the wells in South Terrace.

Statement: (To the board) Thank you for all of the work that was done to get the assessment down to \$3,015.

Statement: Willie explained what the purpose of silt fence is, and said that some of the silt fence has gone missing. He asked that people leave those areas alone. It will get pulled at the end of the project, and areas will be reseeded. Any of the little flags along the route are marking utilities, and those need to be left alone also.

Statement: (To the board) Thanks for all your hard work.

There were no further questions.

Felde-Finke closed the public hearing.

MOTION to approve a Resolution Adopting Assessment Roll for the Twin Lakes Township Water Infrastructure Improvement Project was made by Willie and seconded by Vernon; all voted yes, the motion passed.

MOTION to adjourn was made by Felde-Finke and seconded by Willie; all voted yes, the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Chapin, Clerk

Diane Felde-Finke, Board Chair