

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE  
PLUM CREEK MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY  
July 2018**

A regular meeting of the Board of The Plum Creek Municipal Authority was held on July 17, 2018 at the Plum Creek Municipal Authority Business Office Building, South Manheim Township, Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania.

Board members present at the meeting were Jim Ridderhoff, Jerry Weiss, and Matt Gruber. Tom Nagle and Corby Lewis were absent. Others in attendance were Jamie Lorah (SSM Engineering), Joe Zerbe (PCMA Attorney), Keenan Engle (PCMA Operations Manager – Select Environmental), Nancy Wesner (PCMA Office), and property owners who signed the attendance sheet: Keith Frederick, Kathleen Wiltraut & Ric Marks, Richard Hardy, George Ankenbrand, Jean Schreiber, Ron Larsen, Daniel Herner, David Tyson, Lou Warne, Joe Haggerty, Paul Purcell, and Frank Miller.

Jim Ridderhoff called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The minutes for the June, 2018 meeting were accepted by motion of Jerry Weiss, seconded by Matt Gruber, carried by all.

The Treasurer's reports for June, 2018 were reviewed and accepted by motion of Jerry Weiss, seconded by Matt Gruber, carried by all.

Keenan gave the manager's report. In water operations, he reported:

- Normal operations continue. There were no violations to report for the period.
- All wells are operational. Three wells are currently online, and the wells are being rotated to avoid overflowing the water storage tanks.
- The Booster Station is at 12.5 psi.
- All pumps at the Booster Station are operational and are rotating on a monthly basis.

In sewage operations, Keenan reported that:

- Normal operations continue. No violations to report for this period.
- Approximately 30 septic pumps are in the backlog.
- The pump on the Mack pumper was repaired and is now back in operation.
- Both pickup trucks are operational.
- The new influent valve that was ordered for the sewage treatment plant has not yet been delivered. It will be installed as soon as it's received from the manufacturer. There are still issues with the return lines in the plant, and a solution is being determined.
- Carl (PCMA pump truck driver) came in on Saturday to start catching up on the backlog of septic pumps.

Jim asked why it was taking so long to get the part needed for the sewage treatment plant. Keenan said he was told the part isn't a stock item and it has to be manufactured. He said it was expedited when it was ordered but it's still not ready. Jerry asked if there was a backup plan if the faulty valve at the sewage treatment plant failed completely before the new part is ready for installation. Keenan said the pumps would have to be hauled to Pine Grove or Schuylkill Haven again if the sewage plant can't be operated.

Jamie Lorah, SSM, gave the engineering report. She noted that members of the PCMA Board, Dave Bright (SSM), and others met with the DEP in the Sewage Planning Office in Pottsville on June 20th. Rob Stermer, from the DEP Sewage Facilities Planning department, also attended and a discussion took place regarding sewage alternatives and the possibility of abandoning the PCMA's sewage treatment plant as one of the options available. DEP staff were unable to locate some of the planning documents from when the PCMA's sewage plant was originally constructed, and Rob Stermer recommended doing a file review because it's always good to have the background as to how things were set up. SSM personnel looked through their records and found documents that suggested the DEP would support the construction of a treatment plant, but nothing was found in relation to Act 537 approval. Jamie said she submitted a file review request to the PA DEP and she was told that it would be resolved a lot faster if she drove to the Wilkes Barre office to go through the files herself. She said the DEP is always 3 to 4 weeks out for that type of research, and the trip has been scheduled for August 21st. She said she'll try to find other documents before that but the trip to the DEP archives will hopefully uncover what is needed relative to the history of the

PCMA's sewage treatment plant and the planning aspects that went into it from DEP's perspective. She said if major changes were to occur at the sewage plant, Act 537 planning would have to be amended through both townships, and DEP would have to be formally notified. The DEP indicated it would support whatever the PCMA chooses to do.

Jim Ridderhoff said a number of topics were discussed at the meeting. He said members of both townships, some PCMA Board members, Dave Bright (SSM), Joe Zerbe (PCMA Attorney), a representative from Schuylkill County Municipal Authority, and a representative from Mike Tobash's office attended the DEP meeting. He said Rob Stermer had several questions about when the PCMA's sewage treatment plant was originally built and the DEP documents relating to it. Jim said that's what Jaime Lorah will be searching for. Jim asked Joe Zerbe about any documents his law firm (Derenzo & Zerbe) might have because his law partner, Ron Derenzo, was involved in the formation of the Authority. Joe said Dave Bright had contacted him regarding what might be in his files and he touched base with Ron to see if he could shed any light on the situation, but he hasn't been able to meet up with him yet. Jim said if Ron didn't have the records, he might be able to tell Joe where they can be found. Joe said he would follow up.

Jamie said there would be a lot of permit amendment applications that will need to be filed if there are upgrades or changes to a sewage treatment plant. She said the PCMA's original treatment plant predates water quality management permitting and there may not be any documentation regarding it. But she said she'll find it if it's there. She said she can't get in the door to check until August 21st because her attendance has to be scheduled. The DEP will not search the archives for people anymore, and it has to be done by the person wanting the information.

Jim said there was also a lengthy discussion at the DEP meeting about how the PCMA's operations are now run, the billing process, the need for repairs for the treatment plant, and the existing charges for sewage. He said they discussed the problem of deciding whether to fix the sewage plant or abandon it, and how those things might be accomplished. In part of the discussion, pumping rates were discussed, and Jim said Rob Stermer indicated that the Authority was undercharging for pumps. One of the other things that came up during research of some of the things relating to sewage operations was that the treatment plant that was constructed in the beginning was only meant to be temporary, and other documents indicated that the feasibility of central sewage was to be looked at when the number of homes reached a certain point.

Jim asked Jamie if SSM could do a rate study to determine what pumps should be charged, or if that was part of the sewage alternatives study. Jamie said it was part of the alternatives study but that particular study was prepared with the intent that the water side of the Authority was subsidizing the sewage. Joe Zerbe asked Jim if the rate study he was looking for would be to determine what the PCMA would have to charge to break even or was it to go out into the market and see what is charged by private haulers. Jim said he's looking for a break-even cost per pump. Jamie asked if the break-even cost would include the cost of repairs to the plant. Jerry Weiss asked if the cost of sewage plant repairs would have to be re-evaluated to see if anything changed. Jamie said the repair situation should be revisited to see if anything additional is now needed or if the original modification needs were the same. She said it would take some time to prepare the study because of the amount of information needed to do it.

Jim asked Joe Zerbe if anything else was discussed at the DEP meeting that he might not have touched upon. Joe said the only other thing that was mentioned was the low-interest financing options available to people with holding tanks who wanted to convert to septic systems. He said long-term loans are available for people who want to convert. He said literature was given to them to hand out, which Jen said was available at the front desk of the PCMA office. The pamphlets were distributed to those in attendance at the meeting. Jim touched on some of the information in the literature such as 1.75% interest and 20 years to pay the loan. Joe said that whatever the Board decides to do will be done with public input. There will be notifications to the public in order for the residents of Lake Wynonah to know what's going on and to be able to provide input. Jim added that this process won't be concluded within a 3- to 6-month process; it will take considerable time.

Jerry said the representative from the SCMA indicated that they did not yet have the necessary permitting for accepting sewage at its Deer Lake sewage treatment plant. Joe Zerbe said they are in the process of obtaining the licensing needed to accept sewage, but they don't know yet when that will be concluded. Joe Haggerty asked if that's because of a red tape issue or if there are physical reasons. Joe Zerbe said it's a little of both. Jamie said the regulatory issues involve amendments that must be made to existing permitting. She said when she talked to Pat Caulfield from the SCMA a few months earlier she was told that they intend to have rates comparable to other sewage plants that can accept septage from outside their communities, such as Schuylkill Haven which currently accepts septage and is amenable to accepting more. Joe Zerbe said that Pat Caulfield indicated there were

also some mechanical changes that had to be addressed at Deer Lake before they can accept sewage.

Joe Zerbe said he sometimes gets the feeling that the residents in Lake Wynonah think the sewage issues are a septic people situation versus the holding tank people. He said it really isn't. The issue with the sewage is the treatment plant, and it affects everybody. The problem is that it will affect the holding tank people more than the people with septic tanks, regardless of what happens, because those people with holding tanks need pumps more often than those with septic tanks. He said he thinks the PCMA Board did a good job of quelling the notion that there's one faction of Lake Wynonah against the other. He said it's the sewage treatment plant that's the problem. The plant is old, and a lot of money is needed to fix it, upgrade it, or replace it. An alternate solution is to shut it down.

David Tyson asked if he understood right that public input will be obtained whatever the PCMA decides. Joe Zerbe said that's what he understood the DEP said to a certain extent, that public hearings could be required. He said he didn't memorize everything that was said, but that was his impression, that there would be a chance for public input. Jim Ridderhoff added that everything decided, and everything done about the sewage issues, will be done at public meetings of the PCMA Board. Dave asked if there were any discussions at the DEP meeting about septic tank and holding tank inspections. Jim said the PCMA's Sewage Management Program dictates testing every three years and that would continue. Jim said it was mentioned that there's a 3-year testing requirement but nothing else about that was discussed. Dave asked if there was a directive from the DEP at the meeting that the PCMA continues to manage the sewage program if the pumping was turned over to outside haulers. Joe Zerbe said, in his opinion, that will be a decision the townships would have to make. Jamie said if the option to go to outside haulers is chosen, the townships would have to revise the Act 537 Planning and will have to indicate in the planning who would be overseeing the Sewage Management Program.

Jim said the topic of outside haulers was touched on at the DEP meeting and whether there are certain procedures the haulers must follow. Jim said the haulers are under the jurisdiction of the DEP and the DEP's regulations; licensing is required, and there are criteria that have to be met for them to operate.

Rich Hardy asked about the decision and implementation timeline regarding the sewage, and what the timeline is for people with holding tanks to put in a new system. Jim Ridderhoff said there is no timeline because nobody can determine how long it will take for changes to take place. Jamie said she thinks it will take at

least 6 months just for the townships to change and update the Act 537 Plans and, once the Act 537 is updated and submitted to the DEP, another 180 days, minimum, for review. She said that's already a year right there. Rich asked if it would take 2 or 3 years. Jerry said there's no way for anyone to know how long it would take if a transition would take place that involved Act 537 updating. Jim said the decision regarding sewage isn't dependent upon how long it takes for people with holding tanks to switch to a septic system. He said the system must be fixed and the solution can't be based on waiting for someone's ground to be ready after remediation (a cut-and-fill). Jim said there are a lot of new sewage systems available for places with very little room for a traditional sewage tank. Jamie said people can also call the local sewage enforcement officer (SEO) for suggestions as to what type systems are available and to determine which systems would work for each particular situation.

Kim Lewis asked if the PCMA would be in the same situation it is right now if there would be no holding tanks. Joe Zerbe said, from what was said at the DEP meeting, not having holding tank waste would make the situation worse because the fluid from holding tanks is needed to make the plant run properly. Joe said water could be added in place of the holding tanks, but the plant wouldn't run smoothly only processing septic tank waste.p

Kim said if holding tank pumps are required to run the sewage plant adequately, and this isn't a position of holding tanks versus inground systems, then he felt that all the people in the development were in this together and all should share in the financial responsibility. He said with the holding tank people getting pumped at least ten times a year compared to septic tanks that get pumped once every thirty-six months, then the holding tank pumps are paying for the lion's share of the costs to keep the sewage operations running. He said, using the association amenities as an example, there are people in the community who don't use the swimming pool and don't use the docks or play areas, but everybody pays their fair share toward maintaining them. Kim said it should be the same for the sewage. The sewage is part of everyone's responsibility and it should be everybody's responsibility to keep it running.

Joe Haggerty said it would be interesting to see what it would cost for the SCMA's Deer Lake plant to take Lake Wynonah's sewage. He said he thinks the cost would probably be almost nothing. He said he thinks the SCMA only charges \$4 for a thousand gallons. Jim Ridderhoff said the SCMA won't only charge \$16 to dump a truck full of sewage, which is about what \$4 a thousand gallons would come to. Joe said when he looks at the SCMA's schedule, people in the county who have

gravity systems only pay \$4 a thousand gallons. He said dumping from a septic truck is as close to gravity as you can get, and he said the SCMA should give the same type rates. He said the cost for Deer Lake to process the holding tank sewage from pump trucks will be negligible. Jamie Lorah said \$450 would be charged to dump a 3,500-gallon holding tank at Deer Lake. She said when you compare the cost to dump a holding tank every month to putting in another system it makes financial sense to have an on-lot sewage disposal system. She said with a septic tank, you're looking at about 500 to 750 gallons of concentrated septage. It costs more per gallon to process a septic tank but you have a lot less volume. So, the cost to pump either a holding tank or a septic tank works out to basically the same price in the end. Joe Haggerty said it's the disposal cost for sewage that should be looked at to see if it can be brought down. He said he doesn't want to pay \$400 to \$500 to have his holding tank pumped. Jim Ridderhoff said the future dumping fees at Deer Lake is something he'd have to take up with the SCMA.

Ron Larsen said, as far as switching to a septic goes, a test hole is the first thing that has to be done to determine if the ground percs for an on-lot system. The SEO will then determine what type of system can be used based on the size of the property and how the ground percs. He said the SEO is the one who must approve the system for a contractor to install.

Lou Warne said that, although Joe Zerbe said the sewage problem isn't a holding tank versus septic tank problem, there is definitely an issue between those two groups of people in the community. He said if the PCMA and the LWPOA work together he feels that a better answer to the sewage problems will be realized. He added that it would be more productive if the LWPOA could work with Plum Creek to come up with the best solution for all the members. Jim Ridderhoff said he understands that, and the PCMA is not moving forward without taking all aspects into consideration, including suggestions made by the LWPOA and others. Jim said it's going to take some time.

In legal matters, Joe Zerbe said routine matters were addressed, including filing and satisfying liens. He said other than attending the DEP meeting, there was nothing else to report.

The Board acknowledged receipt of the 2017 Audit Report prepared by Jones & Co. No irregularities were found during the audit.

The Board revisited a claim made by a customer at 1472 Bearcat Cove who said his pressure reducing valve was damaged during hydrant flushing. The Board members agreed that it was unfortunate that the valve was damaged, but they felt

the PCMA did nothing out of the ordinary to have caused the damage. However, the Board made a good-faith, no-fault decision to reimburse \$133 to the customer for half the cost to replace or repair the valve as full and final payment of the claim. The decision was made upon motion by Jim Ridderhoff and seconded by Matt Gruber. Jerry Weiss abstained from voting. Jen will prepare a letter to accompany payment, to be reviewed by Joe Zerbe.

Another customer at 2336 Spear Cove claimed that his driveway was damaged when the PCMA pumped his septic tank. PCMA personnel took pictures of the driveway and submitted them to the Board. Jim Ridderhoff said that it was the responsibility of the property owners to make sure their driveways can support the pump trucks. Matt asked if the pump truck was full when it was pulled into the driveway. Keenan said it was empty and it was a third to half full when the truck was pulled out. Also, it was extremely hot the day of the pumping, but the customers called for an emergency pump and they wanted done right away; it could not be put off until another day. After looking closely at the pictures, the Board did not feel that there was any wrongdoing on behalf of the Authority, and they could not determine when some of the marks on the driveway were made. The Board denied the claim upon motion by Jim Ridderhoff, seconded by Matt Gruber, and carried by all.

There being no further business, Jerry Weiss motioned for adjournment, Matt Gruber seconded the motion, carried by all. Jim Ridderhoff adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Meeting minutes were taken, prepared, and submitted by Jennifer Hoy.