



CITY OF WASILLA

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COUNCIL MEMORANDUM 96-42

From: John T. Felton, Public Works Director/City Engineer

Date: April 15, 1996

Subject: Referencing WMC 5.20.030 General Conditions of Construction of Sewer Connections

The weakest link and presently the most costly one in the sewer collection system is the pumps. Once the customer supplies the pump, it is the utility's responsibility to service and maintain the pumps for the rest of the life of the structure. This is presently a considerable burden on the Public Works Department. The FY97 budget has a line item of \$10,000 just to purchase replacement pumps and maintain the ones that are in service. This does not include the man-hours and physical plant that have to be maintained to service these pumps. This fiscal year we will spend nearly \$20,000 on this line item due to the unusual winter freezing problems.

The obvious answer is to eliminate the pumps. This however, is neither feasible nor practical under our present collection system. What is feasible and reasonable is to limit the number of pumps that have to be maintained. This would require developers and customers to install gravity collection systems to one main pumping vault or septic tank. Then one set of pumps could serve many homes.

This solution has problems associated with it that must be addressed. The Public Works Department has been working on addressing these problem since I have been with the City. There are five major questions that must be resolved prior to enacting a change in the ordinance:

- * Who will pay for and be responsible for the electricity?
- * How will billings be handled to multiple users?
- * How can service be discontinued for non-payment of bills without adversely affecting the other users?
- * If there are multiple users of different sizes, how will the costs be prorated?
- * If stage development is to occur, who pays for the initial installation and who pays for the various upgrades that will be required?

The City has received a request from William B. Odom to install a single pumping vault to serve two homes. This case is unique in that the design requires two individual septic tanks on two separate lots. The tanks then drain to one pump vault. The Public Works department could easily plug either service without affecting the other service. Mr. Odom has agreed to pay all construction costs and provide an electrical service, in the City's name, solely for this vault. He has further agreed to place a deposit for the first three months of the estimated electric service costs to assure that there are no operating cost burdens on the City. This will allow time for the Public Works and Finance Departments to calculate a reasonable rate for providing the total sewer service.

The Public Works Department will assure that all construction and products are in compliance with City standards. In addition, we will require very specific as-builts that will detail the location of each service line. These as-builts will be necessary if the services have to be separated.

We are requesting eighteen months to study the entire question and this specific installation. That should be sufficient time to bring an ordinance to the Council to address all of the problems. The Public Works Department does not feel that other individuals should be allowed to be pilot programs and this is a one-time circumstance. If a major developer was to request the same service in the interim, then we feel this would require an ordinance change rather than a waiver.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council adopt Resolution WR96-27, with its stipulations, and allow the Public Works Department time to study this problem and bring a complete ordinance modification back to the Council for review.



John T. Felton
Public Works Director/City Engineer