

CASCADE CHARTER TOWNSHIP

CITIZENS PFAS COMMITTEE MEETING

January 13, 2022 at 4:00pm

Kent District Library– Wisner Center

2870 Jacksmith Ave SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Members Present: Supervisor Grace Lesperance, Ben Greemann, John Lipford, Kris White, Patti Baldwin, Chris Noordyke

Others Present: Prein & Newhof Engineer Brian Vilmont, Resident Penny Minhinnick-Burns, City of Grand Rapids Representative Wayne Jernberg, Doug Van Essen of EGLE, Aaron Assmann of EGLE, Kevin Koster of Prein & Newhof

ARTICLE 1. Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm.

ARTICLE 2. Approval of the Agenda: Motion by Supervisor Lesperance, Supported by Member Baldwin to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

ARTICLE 3. Acknowledge Visitors & Public Comment: There were not any visitors in attendance.

ARTICLE 4. Approval of Minutes from 12/2/2021 meetings: Motion by Member Lesperance, supported by Member Baldwin to approve the 12/2/2021 meeting minutes. Motion carried.

ARTICLE 5. Update on Public Water Extension Project

Brian Vilmont, a project manager with Prien Newhof, who previously worked at Fishbeck as engineer from 1990 to 2013 and was on the Goodwood Water Lane project, updated the committee on the water extension project. The survey is complete and 50% met with the City of Grand Rapids on January 12th.

The water mains will be on north and west sides of the road (generally speaking), 19-21 ft off from the center of roads. There will be two special cases where this won't be the case, one where it will cross the creek at Tricklewood, and one where it runs up to the bayou.

Contractors will install water mains at intersections and do all the testing so that the mains reach the curbs and then plumbers will connect the water main to the individual houses. They will pre-qualify plumbers, like they did in Plainfield, so that all the plumbers know exactly what they must do to uniformly connect each line from the right of way, into the house. They will each need to reconnect irrigation lines. The pressure coming from the water main will be a bit higher than what is normally preferred, so they will make pressure lessening valves available

to residents. There will also be small pressure releasing valves that are installed at the base of the water main so that pressure is lessened before getting up to the house.

The committee will plan neighborhood communications. Generally, contractors will be working completely in the right of way and only in platted areas, except on Burger. They will need help from residents to identify where any of their underground dog fences, sprinkler systems, and other property enhancements are placed so that everything gets put back correctly.

They are trying to get the project out for bids at the end of February/beginning of March. It will be open for 30 days and then, with the signing of contracts and other documents, they expect a start date of mid to late May and a completion date of sometime in October; some service work may go even longer due to the lines needing to be in and tested before they are connected to the houses. There will be two phases, one including property south of the creek and one for property north of the creek. Either one crew will have to start the one underground phase and be done before the other area begins or one contractor will need to run two teams and do the work concurrently. This could decrease the amount of time before the project is completed but it could also cause more disruption.

Koster said that funding for extending the lines from the curb stop into the house will be funded and residents will be able to see the cost, but they will not be responsible for paying it. The plumbers will also cap wells for residents currently using them but some of them won't want them capped. The owner of a well company is spreading information, saying that residents should keep their wells and not move on to city water. Van Essen said that about 40% is above the drinking water table but they want to make sure everyone who may have a PFAS problem is connected. There will be a provision where residents who don't want to be connected to city water can apply to have an exception granted, allowing them to keep their wells for irrigation. In another area that had problems with PFAS, 25 households applied for the exception and only 6 exceptions were granted. Those in the periphery who have PFAS results of zero/non-detected and are not in the gradient of the expected plume path, may be eligible to keep their wells, but this waives their right for the township to cover the cost of connecting their property to city water both now and in the future. Residents who want to be an exception will have to get their water tested and, if there is ever any PFAS detected in their water, their exception will immediately expire, and they will have to pay to be connected to city water. Residents who use geothermal have gotten exceptions in other areas with PFAS problems because it would be ridiculously expensive for them to use city water on open loop geothermal; closed loop geothermal wouldn't be a problem. If there are households who have open loop geothermal, the airport may be required to pay for the transition.

Baldwin asked if residents could request a waiver to connect to city water. Van Essen said they didn't have the option; it is a mandatory hookup and a mandatory cap unless there is an exception. Another problem they are having is people who spread negative stigma about city water which encourages more residents to seek exceptions. The way the committee can combat this stigma is by telling residents

that they are assuming the risk if there is a PFAS problem with their water in the future. They will be required to disclose their lack of connection to city water on buy/sell agreements and this would limit the home's marketability towards vulnerable people that could be hurt by PFAS, such as children. Assman asked about funding 5 years down the line if problems occur. Van Essen said that if they have an exception permit, they will have to record it, so any potential buyers understand what they're getting. Their contract will be required to contain a provision for, if they continue to use the well water and a PFAS contamination emerges, the exception permit will be revoked, the resident will have to disconnect their well, deal with their own well abandonment, and pay for the whole connection to city water out of their own pocket.

Lipford asked if they'd heard anyone asking why, if there isn't any PFAS currently detected in their water, they can use well water for irrigation but not drinking and bathing. Van Essen said that the airport should encourage residents to make the switch because it is their responsibility for the plume and, if the plume grows much larger, they will need to track it even more. Residents who aren't accepting the transition should consider the future stigma of not having city water in an area where well water may not be safe and the potential that they won't be able to sell their homes, will have lower home prices, etc. if they don't get hooked up to the city water. The committee needs to encourage residents that this is a one-time offer and, as cities become more urbanized, residents will have to hook up.

Vilmont shared that of the two sections, some residents get on this year, and some will be next year so that eventually everyone east of Thornhills will have city water. The second phase is mostly green dots with a few yellow dots, so there'll likely be more resistance to the change in phase two. Most residents are not concerned about household water, only the cost of irrigation water.

So far, the project has gotten \$5 million from the state, \$1.6 million from the airport, and senate bill 565 includes \$3.4 billion of funding for the water industry and PFAS expansions that the project can apply for. Hopefully they will be able to get funding through this senate program so that the cost will be fully covered but, if not, the cost will be passed down to residents in the form of rate increases beginning in phase two.

Minhinnick-Burns explained that the deicer caused problems similar to PFAS in the past and the airport tried to get out of it because the problem wasn't on the airport property, it had spread to resident properties. Van Essen said that, if the airport is causing the pollution, the FAA says they can incur these costs through landing fees. The committee may not have to file a suit if they can get the cost covered through these types of grants.

There aren't any part 201 limitations and they believe the arguments are stronger on the injunction side because that makes the charge damage recovery and the can work on a sent order or the DEQ/ECO can go after the airport for past crimes. In Plainfield, Algoma was compliant with health claims and heating systems because

there was tolling; those claims are potentially at risk. Lipford wondered if residents should know that they may be able to make these types of claims, nuisance and otherwise, that are tolling, and they may want to consult council and consider getting a tolling agreement before starting the process. The federal government is dragging its feet on making PFAS part of SURFA because they have so many Air Force bases that have used/are using PFAS. This will add to the stigma if the PFAS problem is not resolved, which is good as it promotes Superfund designation, but it is also bad because it broadens the net of liability; the state is aggressively going after PFAS so it most likely won't go Superfund in Cascade.

Vilmont said that anyone who isn't in the PFAS contamination area but can get connected to city water will also get the list of pre-approved plumbers and be allowed to connect to the water main as well.

ARTICLE 6. Planning for February 3rd Resident Meeting

Vilmont shared the need to communicate with residents as to how and where the water main is being installed this summer as well as the process to get someone connected, receiving the plumber list, capping of wells, and liability. The water main company only wants to be involved in the water main installation and not deal with the liabilities, specific cases, and situations that may arise. The committee will need to educate residents and go through stages of grief before getting shovels into the ground and digging begins. Surveying is currently happening, but they are only telling people they are surveying for a water main to keep communication pointed and consistent, not to hide information.

White suggested they bring some examples of what water bills may look like on city water as some residents are freaking out, thinking their water bills will be astronomical and all of the trees along the side of the road will be cut down. They need to get the facts on how much it actually costs people who currently have city water and irrigate so that they can see it won't be a massive increase. The water bill has two components, readiness to serve: the monthly fee to have watermain outside of the house, and the commodity charge: the cost of water per unit. That can be quantified to show statistics and a rate study. This information has been provided to TM Swayze and can be looked up at GRcity.us by typing 'water' in the search bar to look at the historical rate studies for the past 18 years.

Baldwin suggested 6-8pm for of the resident meeting. This will be a presentation style meeting rather than open house style so everyone will be present at the same time and will include a timed agenda. Baldwin said that Sandy Wynn Stelt (social worker) can come speak at the meeting if the committee wants as she was affected by PFAS. The committee will have suggested questions ahead of time so that people can see what is already being answered at the meeting. This may be done by having a question board or survey monkey so people can see if their question fits into the base questions already being answered and what other residents have asked. The meeting will be two hours at maximum and have a set end time. Residents will be given a specific length of time that they can speak/ask questions.

Lipford asked how much of an increase it would be to water bills if the residents ended up having to foot the bill for phase two. Jernberg said that Grand Rapids spreads the cost out over 75 years due to their depreciation formula and he will look into the cost, but it wouldn't be a huge impact and that's only if grants aren't funded and the airport isn't charged. He has spoken to the state senate about how areas, including Cascade, need more funding to get rid of PFAS.

Baldwin said that residents will be notified by US Mail that the meeting will take place 6-8pm Feb 3rd and will also put it out on the PFAS Google group. Member Lesperance said that she will work with TM Swayze to get the letter out and work out how to best conduct the meeting to get information to the residents. Vilmont said he will present everything at that meeting the same way he did at this meeting, so they know they are getting information directly from the subject matter expert.

ARTICLE 7. Superfund Designations for PFAS sites: It isn't likely the Cascade will qualify as a superfund designation.

ARTICLE 8. Roundtable/Q&A: There weren't any additional questions.

ARTICLE 9. Public Comment: There weren't any visitors in attendance.

ARTICLE 10. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 5:21pm.

Approved by the Citizens PFAS Committee – TBD