

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
VILLAGE OF MARCELLUS
HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL
ON SEPTEMBER 28, 2015**

PRESENT: John P. Curtin, Mayor See List
Sara N. Tallman, Trustee
Jeff Brown, Attorney
Greg Crysler, WPCP

ABSENT: Patrick W. Cox, Trustee

Mayor Curtin asked for a motion to open the public hearing at 7:00 p.m. Trustee Tallman made a motion to open the hearing, seconded by Mayor Curtin. Both board members voted aye, and the public hearing was opened.

The Village Clerk read the legal notice of the public hearing to those in attendance.

Mayor Curtin explained that the purpose of the public hearing was to allow all interested parties the opportunity to be heard regarding a proposed increase in the sewer rents, allowing the Village Board to adopt a resolution amending Document G of the Village of Marcellus Code Book.

Mayor Curtin made the following comments:

The background information on the need for the proposed increase lies in the fact that increased costs in the transportation and treatment of sewage as well as the operation and maintenance of the Village Sewer System continue to rise dramatically.

Another and potentially more serious reason for the proposed increase is the increased costs resulting from directives and mandates imposed on the Village by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

For the previous three years, the Village, together with the Town and the School District, had been involved in a sewer consolidation project that resulted in remarkable improvement to the Sewer System, particularly the transmission lines, some of which are over 80 years old. The project saved money and would have enabled the Village to keep sewer rates at an acceptable level, except for unfunded mandates from the DEC.

A major concern for the DEC is the condition of the Treatment Plant itself, and its inability to adequately reduce the amount of phosphorus that, through its sewer effluent, empties into Nine Mile Creek – a tributary of Onondaga Lake. In order to reduce the amount of phosphorus to an acceptable level, it was determined by Village engineers that a total reconstruction of the Treatment Plant is necessary, at a cost of approximately \$5.5 million. The cost would effectively bankrupt the Village, but the Board's petitions for some sort of modification of the mandate by the DEC have been rejected. As of January 2016, the Village Treatment Plant will be labeled "in consent," meaning that the Village will be in violation of its permit to operate the plant and will be subject to fines and court action.

In order to adequately prepare for the eventuality, the Village Board found it necessary to build up its sewer fund balance and the proposed increase in sewer rents is the first of several projected increases that will be necessary in the next few years.

Mayor Curtin informed the public that a sewer rate increase, effective October 1, 2015, would be proposed by resolution, raising the minimum sewer rent from \$51.91 per quarter to \$63.00 per quarter. Mayor Curtin noted that sewer rents had not increased since 2007, and the increase will cause the average village residential property owner to pay an additional \$15 per quarter, from approximately \$300 per year to approximately \$360 per year. He also noted that New York Rural Water stated that a treatment plant that does not charge at least \$1/day, is losing money and grossly underfunding the service.

He went on to say that the cost of sewer service provided by the Onondaga County Metropolitan Treatment Plant, by comparison, is currently \$411 per year, and in the next County budget year will rise to \$432 per year. As County officials recently pointed out: "Rates will keep rising to pay the looming costs of the cleanup of Onondaga Lake,

upgrades to treatment plants and replacement of old sewer pipes.” Since the Village Treatment Plant empties into an Onondaga Lake tributary, the Village also became responsible for the cleanup – despite the fact that the Lake has now been pronounced, “clean enough in which to swim,” and “cleaner than some of the Finger Lakes.” In addition, “Onondaga County dodged a bill of potentially hundreds of millions of dollars this past summer when environmental regulators eased restrictions on the amount of phosphorus that its sewage treatment plant could dump into Onondaga Lake. The regulators accepted the County’s position that so much progress had been made removing phosphorus from the lake that the additional improvements necessary to meet the standard set in 1998 would not be worth the enormous expense.” Mayor Curtin mentioned that those in Marcellus might then ask: why is it necessary for Marcellus to spend millions of dollars on a Lake that has improved so much?

Mayor Curtin reiterated that the increase would be the first of several increases that the Board will consider in the months and years to come. In order to fund an upgrade to the Sewer Plant totaling approximately \$5.5 million, Village engineers projected that the cost per sewer user could potentially be about \$490 per year, if no other funding is found. If the Board is able to obtain grants for the project, the cost per user would be reduced according to the value of the grant, and the Board has been actively pursuing many grant opportunities in recent months. An \$80,000 grant was awarded to the Village recently, and the Board is hopeful that a WQIP grant in excess of \$1,000,000 will be forthcoming in the months ahead.

Mayor Curtin then asked Treatment Plant Operator Greg Crysler to make a few comments. Greg emphasized that Village Sewer Rates have not risen since 2007 because the Village has been very pro-active in looking at ways to save money at the WPCP. Greg informed the public about several methods the Treatment Plant Operators implemented, which resulted in the Village not having to raise sewer rates over the past several years.

- a. Operation and Maintenance – more in-house and less outside contractor work
- b. NYSERDA grant led to major electrical upgrade at the plant and much saving at the Plant
- c. Sewer Consolidation Project – much efficiency – took over Town / School with same workers
- d. Composting project, which saves the Village trucking and dumping fees
- e. Examining the use of solar panels, in an Intermunicipal agreement with Town and School
- f. Despite the Village being very pro-active, the unforeseen and unfunded mandates by the State, the village cannot fund this project without raising rates for sewer users.

Mayor Curtin then asked for questions or comments from the public. There were no comments. Trustee Tallman made a motion to close the public hearing at 7:10 p.m.. The motion was seconded by Mayor Curtin. Mayor Curtin called for a vote. Both board members voted aye and the public hearing was closed.

Dawn M. O’Hara, Village Clerk