

# Green Acres Sewer Extension Project

## Public Meeting Minutes

April 15, 2021, 1:15 PM – 3:00 PM

Civic Center

### 1. Welcome & Introductions

- a. Shannon Holmes - City Public Works Director, [sholmes@livingstonmontana.org](mailto:sholmes@livingstonmontana.org)
- b. Martha O'Rourke - City Project Manager, [morourke@livingstonmontana.org](mailto:morourke@livingstonmontana.org)
- c. Public Works phone number: (406) 222-5667
- d. Matt McGee - Consulting Engineer, [matt.mcgee@tdhengineering.com](mailto:matt.mcgee@tdhengineering.com), (406) 586-0277
- e. Please feel free to reach out to any of us with questions you may have throughout this process.

### 2. History & Importance of this Project:

- a. 2003 Preliminary Engineering Report by Nelson Engineering
  - i. The 1<sup>st</sup> time the City looked at a sewer main extension into Green Acres was almost 18 years ago;
  - ii. This was a very broad study that likely did not look into locations of existing septic systems, just provided an alignment recommendation for the new sewer mains. Green Acres was one of four subdivision analyzed in this study;
  - iii. TD&H will reuse as much of this report as is relevant.
- b. 2017 Water Main Loop
  - i. Water valves were added in 2017 near the Brookstone Subdivision to be able to isolate Green Acres water mains for repairs as needed.
- c. Further discussions regarding annexation, future sewer improvements, and water improvements were held with the City during a 2017 Green Acres HOA meeting.
- d. The City officially annexed Green Acres in February 2020.
- e. Rising costs of construction: The project only becomes more expensive as time goes on. Prices of labor and materials have been steadily increasing over the past decade.
- f. Public and Environmental Health & Safety
  - i. Aging septic systems, most (if not all) not in compliance with present regulations. The lots in Green Acres are simply too small for septic systems.
  - ii. Many existing replacement drainfields are currently located on top of water services to homes.
  - iii. Some properties still have existing seepage pits that discharge wastewater directly into the ground without any filtration.
  - iv. The Department of Environmental Quality and the County Sanitarian will no longer approve septic systems here. By state law, a subdivision is required to connect to a City sewer main if one is available within 500-feet of the subdivision. (Montana Rule 17.36.328)

1. City Code (Section 14-81) requires connection within 90 days (clarification from 60-days as stated during our meeting) if a sewer main is available within 150-feet of an individual property.

### 3. Project Goals

- a. Provide every City property with reliable utility services
  - i. Each property, whether developed or vacant, will receive a sewer service stub for connection.
    1. Please note that if a vacant lot does not connect to the City sewer main or if services are turned off (for seasonal residents), the lot will still be billed a monthly service fee which covers service of the main. This fee is currently \$18.94 per month for sewer.
- b. Protect drinking water quality
- c. Protect environmental quality
- d. This study will provide a sewer alignment that is supported by the Green Acres residents and will provide a cost estimate for the construction of the project. The design and construction will not include work to disconnect from existing septic systems or run the new sewer service and connect to the sewer stub.

### 4. Communication

- a. Transparency and community involvement
  - i. Residents would like a monthly update on the project
  - ii. Many prefer email communications; however, some do not use email. Other options are to visit the City's website or Facebook page for updates.
  - iii. We will mail out a letter regarding the next public meeting.
- b. Improvelivingston.com
  - i. This site was used to update residents on the Downtown CIP projects. It will be updated to be used for the Green Acres project.
  - ii. Information to be posted includes: meeting times and locations, meeting minutes, project updates, spreadsheet of estimated SID costs, status updates for any grants that are applied for, the annexation agreement for Green Acres, the 2003 Sewer PER, etc.
  - iii. A link to the site will be provided on the City's website as well.
- c. Email list
  - i. A sheet of paper was passed around for attendees to list their contact information (emails and phone numbers) during this project.

### 5. Project Costs & Funding

- a. Special Improvement District (SID) for sewer
  - i. An SID will allow for the total cost of the project to be paid back over 20 years.
  - ii. SID process is outlined by the Montana Code Annotated (MCA Title 7, Chapter 12, Part 41)
  - iii. Cost per property will be assessed based on square footage of the property.

- iv. The assessment will stay with the property should a homeowner sell in the future.
- v. The SID will cover the design and construction of the new sewer mains, any impact fees, as well as a payback to the Brookstone Subdivision (see below).
  - 1. Each lot (even those that are presently undeveloped) will receive a sewer service stub.
  - 2. Final costs will be estimated in this engineering study
  - 3. The \$150 connection fee will be waived for each sewer connection, as was approved by the City Manager in past meetings.
  - 4. Development impact fees of each new sewer connection will need to be assessed. Impact fees cover the added impact of each service on the City's sewer system and Wastewater Reclamation Facility. This will ultimately be the City Commission's decision.
    - a. The current impact fee per sewer connection is approx. \$4,500
    - b. Additional information regarding the City's code on Development Impact Fees may be found here:  
[https://library.municode.com/mt/livingston/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=CH24DEIMFE](https://library.municode.com/mt/livingston/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CH24DEIMFE)
    - c. This will be included in the final SID cost.

b. Water SID?

- i. A cost-efficient option is to include water improvements to the project now rather than addressing them in a few years under a separate project. The ultimate decision for adding the water improvements will come from the Green Acres residents.
- ii. There are no valves in the Green Acres water loop. Should a water repair be needed, it is going to impact all of the water users at Green Acres because there is no way to isolate a section of pipe.
- iii. The loop will require additional fire hydrants to bring the system up to fire code.
- iv. Water mains are 70+ years old and not built to City standards. These will eventually need to be replaced completely.
  - a. Tana Lane and North Spruce Lane do not have water mains. Water services to the houses on these roads cross through their rear neighbors' properties.
- v. We can provide costs for adding water to the sewer project in two different scenarios:
  - a. Minimal water improvements (adding valves and hydrants)
  - b. Full water main replacement with the addition of a water main in Tana Lane and in North Spruce Lane.

- c. Green Acres HOA fees
  - i. The residents voted to have the money distributed back to each property owner. Checks should be received in the next couple weeks.
  - ii. The HOA is officially dissolved.
- d. Brookstone Subdivision payback
  - i. They paid to extend the sewer main to their property boundaries and to upsize it larger than required for their subdivision to allow capacity for future connections in surrounding areas.
  - ii. The payback amount is \$300,000 and will be included in the costs of this project.
  - iii. Similarly, Green Acres sewer mains will be sized to allow for future connection of nearby properties as well. This will create a payback for the Green Acres residents in the future.
- e. Other Project Funding & Cost Comments:
  - i. Aside from the costs associated with sewer main design and construction, each resident is responsible for the costs of connecting their homes to the sewer main:
    - 1. The City's standard \$150 connection fee will be waived.
    - 2. Residents may choose their own contractor to connect from the new sewer main to the existing sewer service from the house.
      - a. Contact your contractor about options and schedule. It could be a busy time if 90+ residents need to connect services at the same time. Options to route sewer from the house to the main (if in the street) include:
        - i. Core a new hole in the foundation such that the sewer service exits the house into the front yard rather than the backyard;
        - ii. Install a septic pump into the existing tank and run a new service from the existing septic tank to the sewer main;
        - iii. Reroute the existing backyard service to the front of the house using a series of 45-degree bends.
    - 3. There may also be an option to utilize the City's contractor to perform this work and have it added to the costs of the SID if desired.
  - ii. Clarification: We want the project to be cost-effective for everyone, not cost prohibitive.
  - iii. City code requires a home to connect to the main within 90 days (City Code, Section 14-81).

## 6. Schedule

- a. Survey of existing infrastructure & property owner meetings
  - i. Plan to start surveying streets, properties, existing utilities, and existing septic systems (tanks, sewer service locations, etc.) in the next few weeks

- ii. Will need to coordinate with each property owner to access yards
- b. Preliminary Engineering Study – to be completed fall 2021
  - i. To include accurate costs estimates for the SID and sewer main layouts
- c. Sewer Main Extension Design – winter 2021
  - i. The design is required to be approved by the MT Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
  - ii. Will develop construction drawing plans for contractors to use for bidding
  - iii. Plan to advertise the project for bid in late winter/early spring of 2022
- d. Next public meeting: 1<sup>st</sup> week of June, after 5pm, at Green Acres Park

## 7. Questions?

- a. The City has only applied for one grant. How will the residents of Green Acres know that the City is pursuing additional grants?
  - i. We applied for the Community Block Development grant (CBDG) in the fall of 2020 specifically for this sewer project, but were notified in January that the grant was not awarded to us.
  - ii. We can provide updates during our public meetings and monthly emails on what grants are most relevant and upcoming, and which ones we are able to pursue for this project;
  - iii. There are not many grants available, and some have 2 year (or longer) cycles. In many cases, if a grant cannot be applied for until 2024, it may not offset the costs of the rise in construction and may not be worth pursuing;
  - iv. The City has many infrastructure projects in queue, and each grant may only be applied for one project. The Green Acres sewer project may not be the best candidate for the City for certain grants as compared to other City infrastructure projects.
- b. When will the Green Acres county taxes be converted to City taxes?
  - i. Likely this coming November (2021), but Shannon will check for the next meeting.
- c. Can a spreadsheet of SID cost estimates be provided?
  - i. Yes, this can be added to the project website when ready.