

Montague Sewer Extension Project

Public Meeting Agenda

January 18, 2022, 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Northside Park

1. Welcome & Introductions
 - a. 8 residents present at meeting
 - b. Shannon Holmes - City Public Works Director, sholmes@livingstonmontana.org
 - c. Martha O'Rourke - City Project Manager, morourke@livingstonmontana.org
 - d. Matt McGee - Consulting Engineer, matt.mcgee@tdhengineering.com
 - e. Please feel free to reach out to any of us with questions you may have
2. History & Importance of this Project:
 - a. 2003 Preliminary Engineering Report by Nelson Engineering
 - b. Montague annexed into the City in 2021
 - i. City code requires every City property to be services by City utilities; this project will start by addressing sewer first.
 - ii. Water mains to be addressed at a later date. The City's Water Master Plan outlines priority projects based on issues in the existing system. The City has many higher-priority water main issues in other parts of the City that need to be addressed before extension of water to Montague.
 - iii. Existing wells will remain in use for now. Eventually, water mains will replace these but the wells will still be able to provide irrigation service.
 - iv. Sewer rates are based on water usage. City will work with well owners to install water meters on these water lines to set sewer rates.
 - c. Green Acres Sewer Extension project discussions began April 2021 with grant funding difficulties. City decided to focus on the ARPA Grant to assist with the financial burden of the project.
 - d. ARPA Grant requirements to benefit ALL City residents
 - i. \$2 million funding request
 - ii. Removing septic systems near Yellowstone River protects the watershed for everyone
 - iii. Septic systems are individual point sources of nutrient loading into the groundwater and river watershed
 - iv. Eliminating over 150 septic systems helps the City meet DEQ discharge level requirements to the Yellowstone River; reduces potential fines that the City cannot control; WRF can test and control the single discharge from the City
 - 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. Most of these properties are too small for a legal septic system that will meet present-day requirements

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

4. Communication

- a. Transparency and community involvement
 - i. There is a Green Acres subcommittee that met with the City frequently during the project planning phases and three full community meetings
 - ii. It is unfortunate that the timing of the ARPA grant did not allow the City a similar time line to work with Montague residents. This meeting occurs after the City Commission decision to include the Montague properties in the ARPA grant application
- b. Improvelivingston.com
 - i. Available information: Meeting minutes from Green Acres, most recent project plans, contact information, the original engineering report from 2003, annexation agreements
- c. Email list
 - i. We have an email list for most of Green Acres residents and will add those who attended today. Our best source of communication, second to emails, are updates to the website. Critical information will be mailed to all residents.

5. Costs & Project Funding

- a. Special Improvement District (SID) for sewer
 - i. SID is a state law method of funding large infrastructure projects
 - ii. An SID will allow for the total cost of the project to be paid back over 20 years.
 - 1. Final project costs will be determined after construction is complete and all associated costs are compiled.
 - iii. SID process is outlined by the Montana Code Annotated (MCA Title 7, Chapter 12, Part 41)
 - iv. Cost per property will be assessed based on square footage of the property.
 - v. The assessment will stay with the property should a homeowner sell in the future.
 - vi. 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. Estimated costs of ~\$1,500 - \$2,000 per year shown in the preliminary engineering study

3. 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
 - c. This will be included in the final SID cost.
- b. Brookstone Subdivision payback
- c. Sewer Tap Fees
 - i. The \$150 connection fee may be waived for each sewer connection, to be confirmed by the City Manager and City Commission.
 - ii. The City's chosen contractor will be installing every sewer tap as the main is installed.
- d. Sewer Impact Fees
 - i. Also known as "sewer development fees"
 - ii. Current fee is ~\$4,500 per sewer service
 - iii. This pays for the estimated impacts of the newly connected property onto the sewer collection system and the wastewater treatment facility (WRF)
 - iv. These fees are used to repair or upsized the sewer collection system and the WRF
 - v. City Commission will need to make the decision for waiving or requiring this fee
- e. The sewer line installation from your house to your property line will be a separate cost from this project. The City's contractor will install the sewer main in the street or alley along with a sewer service stubbed only to your property line. The rest of the way between the house and the sewer main will be the property owner's responsibility.
 - i. A licensed plumber is required to install the sewer service and connect it to the City's sewer main. A list of local licensed plumbers will be available on the project website.

6. Schedule

- a. Preliminary Engineering Study – to be approved by the City Commission in February and final study estimated for completion in early 2022
- b. Results of ARPA Grant should be posted end of February/early March
- c. Survey of existing infrastructure in March
- d. Sewer Main Extension Design – spring 2022
- e. Project out to bid – Summer 2022
- f. Begin construction – Fall 2022
- g. Next meeting will plan for all residents involved with the project (Green Acres and Montague); schedule for after we receive results of the ARPA grant (Feb/March)

7. Questions?

- a. What if we don't get the ARPA grant?

- i. The City will continue with the design to finish the planning side of the project and will continue to apply for every grant that we are eligible for before construction.
 - ii. The City was very close to obtaining the first round of grant money (#80 on the ranking list) but the State only funded the top 75 projects. We are very optimistic for this second round of funding.
- b. Why are other in-town septic systems not being forced to connect?
 - i. Only the City Commission can force connection, and they can do so at any time. The Commission directs the City staff to address such situations
- c. Why can't the City change its code to allow septic systems in City limits?
 - i. This is not just a City code, but it is state law (ref. ARM 17.36.328) that if any boundary of a subdivision is within 500-ft of any component of a public utility (water or sewer) then it must be connected
- d. Can the impacts from these two Subdivisions be quantified?
 - i. The DEQ regulates all effluent nutrient loads from private septic systems and municipal facilities. These are public and available for review online.
 - ii. Private systems within a City are impossible for the City to regulate which is why City code requires property sewage to be treated by one treatment facility
 - iii. One treatment facility means one regulated (tested, inspected, enforced by DEQ) point of discharge, which for us is the Yellowstone River. The discharge water from this facility is regulated and much cleaner than the river's water with impacts from non-point-source discharges from agriculture and ranching
- e. How long is the project going to take? Are we going to be able to access our homes if the street is shutdown for installation?
 - i. There will be a significant quantity of sewer main with this project and will likely take a couple construction seasons (weather dependent)
 - ii. The City will stipulate construction requirements to limit the amount of open trenching at any given time to minimize impacts to residents.
 - iii. Work will likely occur one street at a time and all installation will be complete and backfilled (aside from re-paving) before moving on to another street.
- f. What about the lots in the south parts of Montague that are adjacent to an existing sewer main? Will these properties be a part of the SID or can they just connect and abandon the septic system?
 - i. This will need to be addressed by the City Commission