



CITY OF BLACKFOOT  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes  
157 N Broadway Street, Blackfoot  
October 4, 2023

Committee Members in attendance: Jack Hough, Jim Schnittgen, Debbie Barlow

Committee Members absent: Peter Stewart, Jan McLaughlin, Charlie Kotter

City Staff in attendance: Rex Moffatt, City Sewer Superintendent, Princeton Lee, City Water Superintendent, and Scott Murphy, City Streets and Sanitation Superintendent

Debbie Barlow Called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm

Jack Hough asked how many surveys were filled out, and Debbie indicated she would find out

Jack Hough moved to approve the September 6 2023 meeting minutes, Jim Schnittgen seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Rex Moffatt gave a presentation on the state of the City sewer system, and what needs he foresees in the future: He has been working on upsizing line capacity especially at the end of the line. He is hoping to upsize the line on Lansing Street from 24" to 36". The lines are currently running at 33% capacity and with the upgrade, there will be a significant increase in capacity. The 36" lines will mean a lower sewer availability fee. The availability fee helps fund projects that are planned.

The sewer plant is currently running at about 88%. There is a project proposal to upgrade capacity which will cost \$35 Million. That plan will create redundancy in key equipment and will enable future upgrades to happen at less cost. With the upgrade, the plant would be running at 60% capacity. The sewer plant currently sits on 8 acres and can expand into 12 more. We currently have approximately the equivalent of 6600 equivalent dwelling units, not including industrial uses. The expansion would bring capacity to 12,000 equivalent dwelling units.

Jack Hough wondered about sewer master plans, and two have been done in the past.

With the expansion we will be fine even if there are 3,000 more homes in the city. Without improvements the current system can handle increases in residential units, but not as much. Rex indicated he uses national averages for sewer calculations, which are 100 gallons per day per 3 purple. There are 0.7 lbs. BOD (biological oxygen demand) and 0.7 lbs. TSS (Total suspended solids) per day.

At the current rate of city expansion, the sewer treatment plant will reach capacity in 8-10 years. With expansion, it will reach capacity in 20-30 years. Capacity needs to be evaluated every 10 years, and Rex expects 20 years of life from the sewer components.

Recent upgrades haven't increased capacity, but have created redundancies and upgraded systems. The oldest equipment at the plant are the digestors installed in 1958. They have been refurbished, and the proposed update includes updating the digestors. The dome also needs repair due to acidic gasses corroding the materials. The \$35 Million proposal includes a secondary digester, a new cap with better materials. Having a fourth digester will facilitate easier maintenance since one must be shut down to be maintained. Current maintenance hasn't happened for 19 years.

The \$35 Million hasn't been funded, although the hope exists that a grant could be obtained through DEQ. We haven't been successful in the past, but will apply again. The most recent upgrade cost \$12 Million, we are currently repaying

the bond at the rate of \$1 Million per year. A \$35 Million bond would be three times as much. Bonds must happen for all projects that are not absolute necessities.

There are ideas to contract with a private company to upgrade and run the plant. The private company would capture methane and use it for energy production. The financing for the upgrade would be reimbursed by energy costs. There are only 5 similar facilities in the US, so the model is still fairly untested.

Princeton Lee then addressed the committee regarding water needs in Blackfoot City:

The water department conducts facilities studies every 10 years and the most recent one was conducted in 2020. The highlights of the study are available online. The city uses on average 3.7 million gallons of water per day averaged over the year, but usage is significantly higher in the summer months when water is being used to irrigate lawns. In the winter months, the city uses 1.5 million gallons per day, and that rises to 8.5 million gallons per day in the summer. Water rights are calculated in Cubic Feet per Second (CFS) and water flow waxes and wanes each day. Our peak allowed flow is 23.5 CFS. If we exceed that amount, we are in violation of our allotted amount. Peak demand is currently approximately 18 CFS. We can pump all the water we want, but we cannot exceed the flow of 23.5 CFS. We use approximately 1.37 billion gallons throughout the year. We can double or triple the capacity of the city if people do not use culinary water to irrigate.

One option to alleviate water needs is to install a secondary water system. That system would cost \$50 per linear foot throughout the city and is currently cost prohibitive. As growth continues, it will be another 5-6 years before we need to dig a new well to accommodate growth, and the new well would necessitate purchase of increased water rights.

Another option is to reuse the waste water from the sewage treatment plant to put into a secondary watering system. That would necessitate a \$3-5 Million upgrade at the sewage treatment plant, plus the cost of new piping.

Jim Schnittgen asked if there is a fee for a new sprinkling system. There is not, there is only a \$40 inspection permit. There is also a water connection fee for new developments. It is not cost effective to have a separate meter for irrigation water and for water for household use. Fees are currently tiered.

The water department is currently exploring a location for a new well. With 12,000 more people, we will need a new well (plus accompanying water rights), and another 16,000 people will necessitate a new well and a new tank.

Water fees were recently raised to prevent a deficit in the water budget and to fund critical projects. There are areas in the city which do not have sufficient flow to fight a fire and funding is not in place to correct those issues. The study that indicated a fee increase was in order recommended an increase more than 3 times what was funded.

Other difficulties faced by the water department include federal mandates that increase monitoring, but do not provide funding for additional man hours and testing.

Scott Murphy then gave the committee a report on the streets and sanitation departments in Blackfoot City:

The Fisher St. street project is nearly completed. The next significant project is projected to be Pendlebury St. It is currently in the design phase and is slated for construction in 2025. The rest of the roads in the city are in poor condition. The street department is doing the best they can. There are 6 employees and they plow the roads and fill potholes. There are a lot of failing roads and failing curbs and gutters. The department is sweeping downtown every Friday when nothing else is going on. They have applied for a grant to upgrade Parkway Drive ahead of the bridge reconstruction project. He also favors coordinating projects with the other superintendents to minimize street cuts and save money.

The street department does struggle with aging equipment that requires a lot of maintenance and upkeep. The upkeep gets very expensive because the equipment is all rather old. They are hoping to purchase a new grader in the next year to work on smaller projects. This grader will cost around \$525 thousand, but could be leased for \$50 thousand per year.

The sanitation department recently ordered two new garbage trucks and they should be here soon. They usually last 5-10 years and the department rebuilds what it can. There are currently 7 garbage trucks, with 4 running and 3 used as backup. Recently commercial rates were raised to bring their costs in-line with what residential customers are paying. Residential garbage rates were not raised when the other departments raised fees. Scott Murphy is evaluating all the sanitation fees so that everyone is paying equally for what they are using. Commercial rates will go up 5% per year until they match residential rates. He will reevaluate billing needs yearly.

Scott had some ideas to reduce costs including opening our own transfer station to save fees there, and hauling away recyclables. Sanitation has unlimited growth opportunities and isn't as hindered by infrastructure as the other departments.