

**SEELEY LAKE SEWER DISTRICT**  
**REGULAR BOARD MEETING**  
March 21, 2024

Tom Morris	President	PRESENT	Cheri Thompson	Director	PRESENT
Pat Goodover	Vice President	PRESENT	Troy Spence	Director	PRESENT
Jason Gilpin	Director	PRESENT	Felicity Derry	Secretary	PRESENT
Bill Decker	Manager	PRESENT			

Public Attendance – Appendix A

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order at 6:11pm. The meeting was held remotely at the Barn, 2920 Highway 83, Seeley Lake, MT and via Zoom.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

There were no amendments to the agenda.

**PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS:**

Tom Morris read the President’s comments (Appendix B)

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

None

**MINUTES:**

February 15, 2024

**Cheri Thompson moved to accept the minutes for the regular meeting (February 15, 2024) as circulated.** Pat Goodover seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion was carried.

Tom Morris	Aye
Pat Goodover	Aye
Jason Gilpin	Aye
Cheri Thompson	Aye
Troy Spence	Aye

## **FINANCIAL REPORTS:**

### Invoices

Tom Morris reviewed the March invoices.

**Cheri Thompson moved to approve the invoices as presented.** Pat Goodover seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion was carried.

Tom Morris	Aye
Pat Goodover	Aye
Jason Gilpin	Aye
Cheri Thompson	Aye
Troy Spence	Aye

### January 2024 Financial Reports

Felicity Derry reviewed the January financial reports.

## **MANGER'S REPORT:**

Bill Decker noted that the Missoula City/County Health Department (MCCHD) had installed the transducers in the monitoring wells and would be testing these wells monthly. Missoula County would also be surveying the monitoring wells at no cost to the District. Bill Decker reviewed the results for the Fluorescence Excitation Emission Matrix (EEM) testing, which had been received today.

Shannon Therriault, MCCHD, added that seven of the transducers had been installed, the remainder would be installed in the next couple of weeks. The sampling would be performed in the ten monitoring wells that contained the transducers.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

### Action Plan for 2023-2024 - Committee Reports

#### Pathfinder Article & Email Newsletter

There was discussion regarding putting an article in the Pathfinder.

### Fluorescence Excitation Emission Matrix (EEM) Sampling

Tom Morris noted that the results had been received this afternoon. The preliminary report was that the source of nitrates was human, but the report still needed to be peer reviewed.

### Test Map

Cheri Thompson reviewed the test map for the public that were present.

## Monitoring Wells & Lake Sampling

Covered previously.

## WET Proposal New Wells

Tom Morris summarized which wells were covered in the proposal and discussion followed.

Jess Alexander noted that he had recommended drafting a proposal to install the additional wells prior to the completion of the WET report investigating nitrates, as well as the Isotech report. After reviewing the Isotech report, it was obvious that the source of nitrates was anthropogenic. Therefore, Jess Alexander did not think that it was necessary to install the additional wells, and explained why. There was discussion regarding replacing the well at the Baptist Church.

## WET Proposal Next Step

Jess Alexander noted that Josh Vincent and Steve Anderson were both attending the meeting. Josh Vincent noted that Missoula County collecting and paying for sampling would be helpful and would save the District money. The next step would be to start reevaluating the options to fix the nitrate problem. The District could apply for a Renewable Resources Grant Loan (RRGL) grant to offset some of the cost. The District should continue to coordinate with Missoula County, to ensure that the solution chosen meets all of the regulations. It was important to find the most cost-effective option that would meet needs of the District.

## FY2025 Budget

Tom Morris noted that the Board should be ready to submit the budget by June. Tom Morris reviewed his thoughts on the 2025 budget and discussion followed. Bill Decker added that funds should be included for an income survey. Discussion followed on how to complete an income survey and the associated cost.

## Ermine Contracting Proposal

Brandon Grosvenor noted that Gary Chilcott had prior family commitments and could not attend the meeting. Their presentation had three goals, to continue to nurture the relationship with the Board, for the Board to consider a motion to let Ermine pursue the permitting process and also financing options. This would allow Ermine to provide the Board with a customer cost, as well as a timeline.

Darryl Barton gave some background information and then began the presentation for Ermine. Ermine's design had been based on information from the District's PER. Darryl Barton felt that the Membrane BioReactor (MBR) was a cost-effective opportunity for Seeley Lake and then reviewed the reasons why. The composition of the effluent was reviewed. How the MBR and Clarified Activated Sludge (CAS), a conventional system, worked were explained. The proposed customer cost of the MBR was reviewed, noting that ultimately it would depend on the funding package. Compared to the previous project, Ermine's proposal had less lift stations and pipe, decreasing the O&M cost. The level of treatment was reviewed. Ermine's proposal utilized a design build, which would be more cost effective. The MBR had a small footprint and could be modified by adding cells for increased capacity.

To overcome the challenge that the District did not have a discharge permit on file, Darryl Barton would like to begin the process of apply for a discharge permit, at no cost to the District, and reviewed the requirements for this.

Darryl Barton reviewed the available funding opportunities and then outlined a possible timeline, beginning construction in late 2025, with completion in 2026.

John Richards questioned how much sludge would be produced. Darryl Barton replied that it was hard to estimate and would get him more information.

Tom Morris questioned the higher cost of the screen maintenance compared to a Sequenced Batch Reactor (SBR). Darryl Barton confirmed that had been an issue with the older MBR systems. Tom Morris questioned the cost of the collection system. Darryl Barton replied that the collection system was not included in the cost of \$6.5 million and that that cost of the collection system for phases 1 & 2 of the old project had been approximately \$11.5 million.

John Richards questioned the distribution system from the plant. Darryl Barton replied that they would design an underground drain field; however, including an irrigation system for the summer months would prolong the life of the drain field.

Public: Questioned if there was a timeframe for WET to develop a proposal that would be workable. Steve Anderson replied that the MBR was a state-of-the-art system. Currently it was not clear which areas would need to be added to the system, so the flow rate that would be required had not been defined, making it impossible to know if Ermine's MBR was the correct size. The MBR was one of the possibilities which should be evaluated and WET should work with Ermine to ensure that their system was what the District needed. If the District could secure funding to do the studies, they could be completed fairly quickly.

Cheri Thompson questioned if the District could buy the MBR and locate it somewhere other than the RV Park. Brandon Grosvenor replied that it could go anyway, but he already had a discharge permit. If the District wanted to own the property that the plant was situated on, he could sell them the land. There was discussion regarding fees for the engineering. Darryl Barton requested that the Board authorize them to pursue funding and permitting at no cost to the District.

Jess Alexander felt that the cart was before the horse. The MBR was great technology, but the District was not to the point where they could choose the technology. The needs should be evaluated, as well as all of the technologies, and then the Board could be presented with recommendations. WET could work with Ermine on the MBR, with the Board's approval. The logical next step would be to review what the community needed for treatment, work with Ermine to see what they had and if it was appropriate. With the Board's approval he would like to draft a proposal and a work plan with the next tasks. There were other technologies out there, but Seeley's needs had not been defined.

John Richards questioned that if a somebody brought the District a zero cost proposal, why wouldn't you do it. To apply for the permit would not cost the District a dime and DEQ would be basing the permit on data from the PER. Jess Alexander noted that it would be applying for a permit for a system that might not be appropriate for the Board's needs and recommended that the Board take a breath.

Bill Decker noted that it was not the only MBR or treatment system out there and asked what the cost would be if the District used their engineer. There was discussion regarding how the MBR sitting in a warehouse effected the cost. Tom Morris added that he agreed that the cart was before the horse and asked how long the offer was available and what was the warranty on the system. Darryl Barton replied that he would have to ask Gary Chilcott.

Tom Morris suggested that the Board give permission for Jess Alexander and WET to speak with Ermine and come back to the next meeting with a proposal. There was discussion regarding the next step.

Troy Spence left the meeting at 7:59pm

**Tom Morris moved to give our engineer the permission to visit with Gary (Chilcott) and come up with a global proposal.** Cheri Thompson seconded the motion. Jess Alexander clarified that WET should visit with Ermine and provide a proposal to evaluate the needs of the District and different treatment options at the next meeting. There was no further discussion. The motion was carried.

Tom Morris	Aye
Pat Goodover	Aye
Jason Gilpin	Aye
Cheri Thompson	Aye
Troy Spence	Absent

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### FEMA Funding

Tom Morris noted that he and Bill Decker had visited with the folks from FEMA and the MCCHD. Shannon Therriault, MCCHD, reviewed the grants available to the District that could fund a feasibility study, which were often followed by an implementation grant. Discussion followed on matching funds and having FEMA attend the next meeting.

### DNRC Grants

Bill Decker noted that work continued on the grant. Jess Alexander added that there was a remaining \$5,000 of funds in the Reclamation and Development Grant(RDG) for the remaining wells and recommended closing the grant out.

### CRC Letters of Recommendation

Jon Haufler had provided a draft letter and noted that the Sewer Board could modify it in any way. Cheri Thompson noted that she did not have a problem with signing it. There was discussion with Jon Haufler regarding the CRC eDNA analysis that did not happen and why. The contents of the letters were discussed and the letter was reviewed. Discussion followed on the mission of the CRC.

**Cheri Thompson moved to sign the letter.** Tom Morris seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was carried

Tom Morris	Aye
Pat Goodover	Aye
Jason Gilpin	Nay
Cheri Thompson	Aye
Troy Spence	Absent

### Board Election

Tom Morris noted that he had been approached by a person that would be willing to serve on the Board and had then received a letter from a second person. The terms were not up until May and so this would be added to the May agenda.

### Barn Rent

Cheri Thompson added that the Barn rent was \$50 a meeting.

**Tom Morris moved to pay \$50 a month for each meeting that we meet here.** Cheri Thompson seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was carried.

Tom Morris	Aye
Pat Goodover	Aye
Jason Gilpin	Aye
Cheri Thompson	Aye
Troy Spence	Absent

### **NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING: April 18, 2024**

The next meeting will be held in person at the Barn and via Zoom.

### **AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING:**

Tom Morris noted that the following items should be added to the April agenda: Action Plan – Committee Reports – Pathfinder Article; Mission Update; Test Result Map, EEM Sampling, Monitoring Well & Lake Sampling, WET proposal, FY2025 Budget, FEMA funding and DRNC Grants.

**ADJOURNMENT OF MONTHLY BOARD MEETING:**  
**Tom Morris moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:29pm.**

Attest:

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Tom Morris, President

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Felicity Derry, Secretary

APPENDIX A

SEELEY LAKE – MISSOULA COUNTY SEWER DISTRICT  
 Regular Board Meeting  
 Virtual Meeting Via Zoom  
 March 21, 2024

NAME	ADDRESS/EMAIL	PHONE #
Jeanna Miller, MCCHD		
Shannon Therriault, MCCHD		
Jess Alexander, WET		
Josh Vincent, WET		
Steve Anderson, WET		
Darryl Barton, Ermine		
Brandon Grosvenor, Lazy Acres		
John Richards		
Jon Haufler, CRC		
Mark Williams		
Jenny Lindemer		
Mike Lindemer		
Tom Beers		
Dee Strauss		
Kapp Johnson		
Keely Larson, Pathfinder		



## APPENDIX B

As I have been preparing for this meeting a lot has been going through my mind. I've sat and listened for hours to bureaucrats and politicians who say they want to help the situation in Seeley Lake. So, let me give you a little bit of history – recent history. A few years ago, FEMA sent money down during the COVID pandemic to the states. They sent \$900 million to the state of Montana. The very first day Mike Hopkins, our state representative, who also chairs the Appropriations Committee called me. He said, “the Seeley Lake Sewer District was the first thing that came to mind when he saw that that money was coming.” He said, “we haven't been given guidance yet on how this money can be spent,” but he asked me what would it take to get an affordable sewer system in Seeley Lake? I told him if we had \$50 million, we could build an affordable sewer for the residents of Seeley Lake. He said he would go to work on that. That very evening, on the Evening New, before the Appropriations Committee had even met, our US senator was on the news flaunting how that he had secured \$365 million of that money for the Flathead: Now mind you – the Appropriations Committee had not even met yet! They had not even been given guidance on how it could be appropriated, had not even discussed how the money was going to be dispersed: By the time the Appropriations Committee finally met and appropriated – Missoula County was allotted \$23 million. Missoula County did not even give Seeley Lake Sewer District a look! No call, nothing!

We are now living in a society that has bureaucrats and elected officials that are operating against the Constitution of the United States of America and the State of Montana! They have adopted a religion! They have established a religion and that religion is extreme environmentalism! That extreme environmentalism has eked its way out into every part of our government! They don't write law because they know that they can't! They write policies, they write regulations, they create expensive permit processes, they make it so restrictive that businesses can't afford to have business and people cannot afford to live! Our Constitution also guarantees, our Constitution and Bill of Rights that is, guarantees the inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness which by the way comes way ahead of the environment! More and more these people are trying to stop folks from living here. They're trying to stop industry! In fact, there's one group that's here tonight that their cover page actually admits, yes they want to remove humans from the wildlands interface! That is their goal! They want us to support them. These bureaucrats are going on TV, they're going to the news agencies, they're spreading untruths! One of them being a 60 milligram per liter nitrate level that's been measured in Seeley Lake! Where was that? Maybe that was a typo, but it hasn't been corrected! Another article claiming that we would have had a \$29.00 a month sewer bill!? Now the first thing about this is – these bureaucrats receive their paychecks from the taxpayers! They taxpayers in the Seeley Lake Sewer District voted to reject the bond issue, because it would have cost too much to live in Seeley Lake!

By my account, it would have cost me \$83,000 over the span of the life of the sewer! It would have been much more than that if inflation and interest were added to that! While it's true that Missoula County was going to subsidize the cost for the first three years, which would have reduced it, there was no guarantee of any subsidization later. Again, I emphasize, the voters turned down the bond election. All of us here on this Sewer Board, the County Commissioners, and the Department of Health, all work for the taxpayers and receive their paychecks from them. I'm pretty sure that some of you environmental extremists are sitting at home doing a little happy dance. You're going to force people out of Seeley Lake by regulation and policies that exceed the federal and state standards, but serve your purposes! Last year a major employer in Seeley Lake wanted to put in RV spots and a man camp so they would have a place for their employees to live temporarily. The permitting process in Missoula County was going to cost them \$1 million. Now we have all kinds of politicians showing up for emergency meetings and saying that they care, what can we do to help? On the environmental side we're being told that we're trying to be proactive to stop from health hazards, but on the industrial and cost of living and human side the only action is reactive. These folks are going on TV and to the press in passing down blame on the very people that they work for. I'm not going to blame anybody. I'm saying that we have not worked together proactively towards a common goal. We have not tried together to find an economically reasonable solution that's also environmentally sound. We have a group that's here tonight that's asking us to send a letter of support them so they could get more money to push us out of the wildland interface! This whole area was in the last century, developed by the very people that live here now, and they want us to be gone! But they want our tax dollars! We're no longer going to have the ability in this community to do wildfire mitigation and other work in the forest to make our forest healthy! Now this religion that has taken over our society needs to stop! I don't care if this is my last meeting with the Sewer District, it's time for the truth to be told! We need to come up with affordable reasonable solutions and stop putting people out of their homes! In the meantime, the idea that we can continue to build low-income housing and leave nothing left for the medium income is an ideal that won't survive the test of time. The median income people are the ones who are paying their taxes and supporting the businesses. Now all you business owners, you should be really careful about what you say about the taxpayers and the voters because they're the ones that are paying your bills! You get some money from out of town, but who's going to serve them when there's no place left to live!

Let's start this meeting.