

**SEELEY LAKE SEWER DISTRICT
PUBLIC HEARING
June 26, 2024**

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

Public Attendance – Appendix A

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm. The meeting was held at the Barn, 2920 Highway 83, Seeley Lake, MT and via Zoom.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Tom Morris moved to approve the agenda. Pat Goodover seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion was carried.

Tom Morris	Aye
Pat Goodover	Aye
Cheri Thompson	Absent
Troy Spence	Aye
Vacant	

PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS:

Tom Morris requested public comment on anything that was not on the agenda. There were none.

Report on Written Comments Received by the June 24, 2024 Deadline

Tom Morris noted that no protests or comments had been received.

Tom Morris requested vocal protests. There were none.

Resolution# 06262024 Setting Assessments

Tom Morris read the resolution.

**SEELEY LAKE SEWER DISTRICT
RESOLUTION# 06262024
SETTING ASSESSMENTS**

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors of the Seeley Lake Sewer District (the “Board”) adopted a fiscal year budget on May 15, 2024 for the purpose of setting assessments to fund the administrative costs of District operations, being offset by District reserves for Fiscal Year 2025, and

WHEREAS, the Board heard recommendations to establish equal assessments for setting annual assessments; and

WHEREAS, after giving notice as required, the Board held a public hearing on June 26, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. MDT for the purpose of accepting public comment on establishing the methodology for annual assessments; and

WHEREAS, upon taking public testimony, the Board considered all comments, both written and verbal; and

WHEREAS, the Board determined that the equal assessment method described in § 7-12-2151 (d) M.C.A. would provide sufficient revenues for fiscal year 2025, in the amount of approximately \$30,597.84;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board that the Secretary is directed to coordinate the placement of assessment on the property tax bills for Fiscal Year 2025 as follows:

Equal Assessments: Each lot, tract or parcel of land in the District shall be assessed equally for the Administrative Fee. The amount of the Administrative Fee assessed against each lot, tract or parcel of land in the District shall be \$60.71.

DATED THIS 26th DAY OF JUNE, 2024

Tom Morris moved to adopt the resolution (#06262024). Pat Goodover seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion was carried and the resolution was adopted.

Tom Morris	Aye
Pat Goodover	Aye
Cheri Thompson	Absent
Troy Spence	Aye
Vacant	

ADJOURNMENT OF PUBLIC HEARING:

Tom Morris adjourned the Public Hearing at 5:35pm and moved into the Regular Board Meeting.

SEELEY LAKE SEWER DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
June 26, 2024

Tom Morris	President	PRESENT	Troy Spence	Director	PRESENT
Pat Goodover	Vice President	PRESENT	Tyler Smith	Director	PRESENT
Cheri Thompson	Director	PRESENT*	Felicity Derry	Secretary	PRESENT
Bill Decker	Manager	PRESENT			

Public Attendance – Appendix A
*Joined the meeting at 5:43pm

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Tom Morris moved to move the Board Election item to right after Correspondence. Troy Spence seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion was carried.

Tom Morris	Aye
Pat Goodover	Aye
Vacant	
Cheri Thompson	Aye
Troy Spence	Aye

PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS:

Tom Morris requested that everybody be respectful of everybody’s comments and time.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Arthur Pettit, field rep for Senator Tester, introduced himself and wanted to make Senator Tester’s office available to the District in any way that might be helpful, such as a letter of support or finding available funds.

Cheri Thompson noted that Dave Lapham had asked her to make a proposal that the Board be proactive and send out agendas prior to the meetings and then after the meeting, a short meeting recap be sent to various organizations in town, to be informative and to keep the rumors to a minimum.

Tom Morris noted that they would take that under advisement.

CORRESPONDENCE:

None.

MINUTES:

May 15, 2024

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

Tom Morris	Aye
Pat Goodover	Aye
Cheri Thompson	Aye
Troy Spence	Abstained
Vacant	

Board Election

Tom Morris noted that Tyler Smith had put his name forward for the vacant position on the Board.

Cheri Thompson moved to appoint Tyler Smith to the Board. Pat Goodover seconded the motion. Tom Morris noted that he would not be able to vote in favor, if Tyler Smith was planning to be a possible contractor for the project. Tyler Smith replied that Seeley Lake was out of his market; however, if that changed, he would remove himself from the Board prior to that. There was discussion as to which property he owned. The motion was carried.

Tom Morris	Aye
Pat Goodover	Aye
Cheri Thompson	Aye
Troy Spence	Abstained
Vacant	

Tom Morris noted that the officers should be elected at this meeting.

Cheri Thompson moved to stay the same, Tom Morris to stay as President and Pat Goodover to stay as Vice President. Tyler Smith seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion was carried.

Tom Morris	Aye
Pat Goodover	Aye
Cheri Thompson	Aye
Troy Spence	Abstained
Tyler Smith	Aye

FINANCIAL REPORTS:

Invoices

Tom Morris reviewed the invoices.

Tom Morris moved to pay the bills. Cheri Thompson seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion was carried.

Tom Morris	Aye
Pat Goodover	Aye
Cheri Thompson	Aye
Troy Spence	Abstained
Tyler Smith	Aye

MANGER'S REPORT:

Bill Decker noted that the fee assessment mailing was sent out on time. Bill Decker proposed that the District have a debit card to purchase miscellaneous items, under Board supervision.

Bill Decker had attended a zoom meeting for a Master's Degree thesis on the groundwater issue in Seeley and the failure of District residents to vote to move the project forward. One individual wrote over 20 letters opposed to the project. Interestingly, there was a letter to the editor titled no nitrate issue on the same day as the announcement that the District was in the running for a sizable federal grant. Bill Decker had responded with a letter to the editor the following week.

A requirement of the \$18 million grant application through Congressman Zinke's office was that we provide letters of support. Bill Decker was disappointed in the number of letters that had been received and still encouraged letters of support to be submitted. Congressman Zinke's office had received calls encouraging the Congressman to use a specific piece of equipment and site location for the project, which was not helpful to the District.

Bill Decker felt that it was important that the Board made a statement that they were in favor of the project & grant, and suggested that a statement be drafted for Board approval.

Obtaining a District debit card, setting a spending limit and formulating a corresponding policy was discussed. The Board agreed that Tyler Smith would draft a policy for the next meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Action Plan for 2023-2024 - Committee Reports

Pathfinder Article & Email Newsletter

None.

Monitoring Wells Sampling

Jeanna Miller, Missoula City County Health Department (MCCHD), noted that the goal was to sample the monitoring wells monthly, however due to the diameter and the depth of the wells that probably would not be feasible. The data would be shared once available. The County Surveyor did survey the wells and the transducers were in place.

WET Proposal Next Step

Steve Alexander, WET, noted that this would be more of a status report. The data was being used to identify the nitrate hotspots and the system would be designed around those. Also, how to best fit the project to Congressman Zinke's \$18 million earmark. Bill Decker added that the earmark was now \$10 million and not \$18 million and asked Arthur Pettit if Senator Tester would be able to help. Arthur Pettit clarified that Senator Tester did not utilize earmarks; however, he had secured funding for the District's previous project and could be a resource to find grant funds and write letters of support.

Steve Alexander continued that another task was to develop treatment requirements. Based on current groundwater concentrations the requirement would be to treat nitrate to 7.5mg/L or less.

The next task was to evaluate available technologies. Steve Alexander reviewed the different options that were being evaluated. With the assistance of the District, a selection matrix would be developed to weigh the different categories. This would then be used to compare the different technologies and select the best option.

A future task was to identify potential funding sources. In light of the Zinke funds, WET had met with Missoula County, as well as the Department of Commerce to discuss funding opportunities. One possibility would be FEMA funding. A notice of intent would be submitted to FEMA through Missoula County. Funding agencies that had been involved with the previous project were hesitant to get involved with the District without community support. Jeanna Miller reviewed the possibility of a DNRC grant that could be utilized to assist with the cost of connection.

Steve Alexander noted that potential sites needed to be identified. Bill Decker added that the previous site was still available. The USFS site that was mentioned in the PER was discussed.

Gary Chilcott offered to sell the RV park as a location, if they could lease it back for the RV park. Brandon Grosvenor asked if the Board would be willing to discuss negotiating a sale on that property, which had 2.5 years of monitoring well data and a discharge permit for 10,000 gallons a day. Tom Morris was agreeable to having a discussion. Tyler Smith noted that WET would have to determine how it would be used, but eliminating lift stations would be advantageous. What kind of properties could be considered was discussed.

Cheri Thompson questioned if a small system with the option to use the effluent for irrigation could be utilized in Dogtown. Steve Alexander felt that currently nothing should be off the table. The topography of the town and the condition of existing septic tanks were discussed. Possible locations for the treatment plant were discussed further.

The capacity of the treatment plant and a discharge permit were discussed. The discussion turned to a central sewer and smaller regional systems. Steve Alexander added that step systems would not be appropriate for Seeley.

Cheri Thompson noted that community education was important for people outside of the District also. Steve Alexander added that there were grants available for community education, which could help to lessen misinformation and assist with community support.

DNRC Grants

Covered previously.

FEMA Funding

Covered previously.

Board Election

Covered previously.

Congressman Zinke Grant Application

Tom Morris noted that the full \$18 million was not possible and that if everything aligned perfectly with the current timeline, digging could begin in 2026. Steve Alexander added that the District was currently in the planning/pre-design phase. Tom Morris felt that the District should design a system and see what it would cost and fund it, not the other way around.

Brandon Grosvenor asked if the Board would be interested in allowing them to put something together that would allow the District to accomplish that sooner. Discussion followed on whether Brandon Grosvenor and Gary Chilcott could talk to WET. Tom Morris added that at present the District should follow the guidance of their engineer. Discussion with Gary Chilcott followed. Tom Morris reinforced that the Board would move forward with the recommendation of the engineer and would appreciate if there was no outside interference, noting that we are all in this together and we need to stay on task. Pat Goodover agreed. Tyler Smith added that WET would assess the RV park system, but they were not quite to that point yet.

Geary Alexander noted that without the property there was nothing to draw on. Tom Morris replied that some property suggestions had been made and the District did own a property. Geary Alexander added that the longer you waited the bigger the bill would be. Everybody was so afraid of the future and growth and after all this time he would still not be able to live on his property. Tom Morris noted that the Board worked for the constituents and the constituents had voted. The Board had started over and were moving forward.

NEW BUSINESS:

Midwest Assistance Program (MAP) Introduction

Will Meyer, MAP, could assist the District with funding options and helping with grant applications. Will Meyer agreed that the District should allow the engineer to figure things out and go through the appropriate approval process. The PER and grant funds were discussed.

CDBG Grant

Steve Alexander noted that this was a potential planning grant, which was due in November. Community letters of support were crucial for this grant. This grant, was a stepping stone to a larger grant.

Response to Don Larson's Letter to the Editor

Tom Morris noted that this item reflected back to the item in the Manager's Report that the Board needed to make a statement of cohesion, supporting the project, as well as moving forward with the project. Cheri Thompson added that there was scientific data proving the elevated nitrate levels in the groundwater. Tom Morris was in agreement with Bill Decker that the Board should make a public statement. The Board discussed what should be included and who should write it.

Tom Morris moved that Cheri Thompson draft a letter of response that will be discussed and signed at the next Board meeting. Cheri Thompson suggested that it be a letter of action. **Tom Morris amended his motion that Cheri Thompson should draft a letter of action that will be discussed and signed at the next Board meeting.** Pat Goodover seconded the motion. The Board discussed including a timeline from WET. Bill Decker added that somebody had called one of the newspapers and left an anonymous message that this Board of directors was going to refuse any grant money for this project. Tom Morris added that we include a plea to the members of the community to not speak for the Board. Tyler Smith suggested that the Board encourage people to attend the meetings to share their thoughts in person, rather than on social media. The Community Council meetings and attending the District Board meetings were discussed. There was no further discussion. The motion was unanimous.

Tom Morris	Aye
Pat Goodover	Aye
Tyler Smith	Aye
Cheri Thompson	Aye
Troy Spence	Aye

Jeanna Miller, added that there was a web page called the Missoula County Voice. They were currently working on a page specifically for Seeley Lake.

NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING: July 18, 2024

AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING:

Tom Morris reviewed the items for the July meeting agenda: Grants and funding discussion/action, Monitoring Well and Sampling, Response to the Community, Build a Network to Share Information, Bank Signatories for the bank account & Information on a Debit Card, and Policy on Spending.

ADJOURNMENT OF MONTHLY BOARD MEETING:

Tom Morris moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:28pm. Tyler Smith seconded the motion.

Attest:

Tom Morris, President

Felicity Derry, Secretary

APPENDIX A

SEELEY LAKE – MISSOULA COUNTY SEWER DISTRICT
Public Hearing & Regular Board Meeting
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom
June 26, 2024

NAME	ADDRESS/EMAIL	PHONE #
Michael Letcher		
Geary Alexander		
Gary Chilcott		
Brandon Grosvenor, Lazy Acres		
Tom Beers		
Arthur Pettit, Senator Tester		
Jeanna Miller, MCCHD		
Will Meyer, MAP		
Keeley Larson, Pathfinder		
Nick Hogan		
Steve Anderson, WET		