Kabetogama Township

PUBLIC HEARING

August 29, 2019

Chairman Larry Kec opened the meeting at 7:15 p.m. Board members present were Supervisors Marlene Tomczak and John Stegmeir, Clerk Mary Manninen along with 25 guests. All attending recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Introduction – Chairman Larry Kec explained the purpose of this meeting. To consider the establishment of Subordinate Service Districts in service areas C, F, H and J, pursuant to Minnesota Statues 365A. All persons as desired to be heard with reference to the proposed Subordinate Service districts will be heard at this hearing.

Introduction of the Board of Supervisors of the Township of Kabetogama and attending members of the Kabetogama Clean Water Initiative Steering Committee, Don Breneman Duck Bay Retreat, Jeff Decker Sunset Forest Plat, Tim, Holly Henrickson, Lee Herseth, Jeff Ingals Sunset Forest Plat, Jeff Krueger, Bob Myerson Service area F, Richard Raun State Point, Kevin McMillan Sunset Forest Plat, Richard Schaffer, Tim Snyder service area F. This committee was formed last fall and have been meeting monthly since then. They have worked very hard to get information to all of you.

Supervisor John Stegmeir explained some items from the agenda.

**PATHWAY TOWARD IMPROVING WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE**

**IN THE KABETOGAMA COMMUNITY – A TIMELINE**

**2001 Kabetogama Township in organized**

**2002 Community Action Plan developed**

* # 1 Action Identified – Support Improvements to Community wastewater Infrastructure.
* Township Wastewater/Land Use Committee Formed

**2004 Kabetogama Township Action Plan Amendment**

* Comprehensive Community Wastewater Plan developed

**2005 Establishment of Puck’s Point Subordinate Service District**

**2009 Namakan Basin Joint Powers Board Established (Now called the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board (VNPCWJPB))**

* The Purpose of the Joint Powers Board (JPB) is to provide a comprehensive strategy for improving and sustaining water quality in the communities adjacent to Voyageurs National Park. The JPB assists communities in obtaining funding for their projects.
* Kabetogama Township has a representative to this Board along with Crane Lake, Ash River in the Namakan Basin and Island View in the Rainy Lake Basin.

**2010 JPB Comprehensive Wastewater Plan *Namakan Basin Sanitary Sewer Initiative.***

**2016-17 Puck’s Point Sanitary Sewer District wastewater collection, treatment and dispersal infrastructure is constructed.**

**Summer 2018 Community informational meetings hosted by the Township Board to gauge community support for continuing the wastewater infrastructure improvement initiative.**

**Fall 2018 Kabetogama Clean Water Initiative Steering Committee Formed**

**Spring/Summer 2019 Committee members make contact with their neighbors to gain support for a petition to form subordinate service areas.**

**August 2019 Petitions verified by township**

**August/Sept 2019 Public Hearings**

**NEXT STEPS TO ESTABLISHING**

**THE SUBORDINATE SERVICE DISTRICTS**

I. The agenda for the next monthly meeting of the Township Board of Supervisors, which is Tuesday September 3, will include the consideration of a resolution to approve/disapprove the establishment the subordinate service districts.

II. If the resolution to establish subordinate service districts is approved, the Township Board will take the following actions within 20 days of approval:

* Publish the resolution in the International Falls Journal.
* A notice will be mailed to the owner (and property taxpayer if different) of each parcel within the area proposed to be included in each district.
* The districts will be effectively established 60 days after the date of publication in the International Falls Journal.

III. Reverse Referendum

* If the township receives a petition against establishment of a subordinate district signed by at least 25% of the property owners within the territory of the proposed district and received before the effective date of establishment, the establishment of said district will be postponed pending referendum vote of property owners within the boundaries of the proposed district.

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 **Keeping informed:** Establishing subordinate is just the first step in a multi-year

process to get to an operational community wastewater system. The KCWI Steering Committee encourages you to stay informed of the process going forward and provide your input as you see fit. There are multiple ways you can do this.

1. The KCWI Steering committee posts their agendas, meeting minutes and key documents on the Kabetogama Township Website, kabtownship.org *open the Kabetogama Clean Water Initiative* tab.

2. Kabetogama Township meetings held on the first Tuesday of every month are open to the public. There is a public comment period at each meeting and also a time period to discuss any items pertaining to the Community Sewer Project. After establishment of the subordinate service areas, we will have a conference call number for those who are generally outside the Kabetogama area to call in on the meeting. We will post this number and the call-in time on the Township website (see #1 above) after district establishment.

3. Contact one of the KCWI Steering Committee members.

**Public Comment Period** Chairman Larry Kec opened the Public Comment period and explained the rules. The following is a summary of the comments by those who spoke:

Eugene Thomas: Why do we need a public wastewater system. We need more information.

Jeff Ingalls: Stressed importance of this sewer district in keeping the water clean and the importance of leaving a clean water heritage for the coming generations.

Gary Johnson: Stated that they support clean water but they want more information on cost and has more questions regarding the system as a whole. They also support water conservation and metering.

Tim Snyder: Supports continuance of the proposed districts in this area. We all share Voyageurs National Park and want to keep the water clean.

Holly Natvig: Supports clean water but needs more information on how it may work for seasonal verses full time.

Lisa Thomas: Questions the need for the system on her road where all of the cabins are seasonal. Also, she spoke to the difficulty of installing a system in rock.

Chairman L Kec moved to close the comment period, Stegmeir seconded the motion, all voting aye motion carried.

**Question and Answer period,** The following is a capsulation of the questions asked and answers given.

**Why** **do we need these subordinate service districts:** We put together information for both the informational meeting last summer and for the contacts with property owners this summer. We believe these documents explain why we are undertaking the clean water initiative. We have all the materials from our earlier mailings and contact effort that can be sent or e-mailed to anyone who has lost or misplaced theirs.

**People want cost information**: We don’t have that kind of information right now. Costs are not known until the engineering process has been completed and we have a financial plan that includes an estimate of the cost for operation and maintenance of the system. The Township will keep landowners informed as cost estimates on various phases of the project(s) become known. The Township will use as a guide for whether to proceed with the construction of a project, the costs that property owners on public systems within the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Initiative area now pay for their public sewer systems. That number has a range of around $70-$100 per month per EDU per property owner for completed projects in Crane Lake, Island View and Puck’s Point. That includes the cost of construction plus the cost of operation and maintenance. (EDU=Equivalent Domestic Unit which is basically a measure determined by how many and what kind of buildings on a property are connected to the system. There will be a minimum of 1 EDU per property and increase with additional connected buildings. This number will be assigned as we start the engineering phase of the project and property owners will have input).

**Grinder Station Location:** As far as grinder, location that would be determined by the engineer, but the most logical place to put the tank (grinder station) would be where their septic tank/holding tanks are right now.

**Treatment System Facility Location**: The Township does not know at this time where a treatment system would be located.

**Regulations:** A sewer ordinance and a user rates ordinance will be established as we get further along in the process. These ordinances will establish operating procedures and define a system of charging user rates.

**Funding:** There would be 2 categories of funding: Capital cost, which covers the cost of planning and construction; and Operation, Maintenance and Replacement cost, which is the cost of operating, maintaining the system as well as replacing components as they wear out. We will seek grants to cover a large portion of the capital costs. We will secure loans to cover the remaining portion, which will be paid back by the property owners (proportionally by EDU) as a portion of their monthly fee. At this point, we will define how we charge property owners for operation, maintenance and replacement (OM&R) costs using the model we use at Puck’s Point. OM&R costs are paid proportionally by property owners based on the annual estimated cost per EDU. The more connections, the less the OM&R costs per user. These payments are based on a 12 month basis. Grant dollars received require that we provide 12 year service, the system is maintained year round and users have access to the public sewer year round whether they are part time users or full time users. This model is economically sustainable and is manageable by the Township officers. We will discuss other models as we develop our ordinances.

**Can a system be built in rock:** The system of directional drilling can be used to install the system in either soil or rock.

**Obligation,** The petition that all of you signed is a show of support to establish a subordinate service district. Once a district is established you will be committed to connect to the public sewer (if built) at some point in time. Once we get a good estimate of costs, you will be asked to sign a document which commits you to connect when the system is built. If you don’t commit to connecting during the initial construction, you will be required to connect when your individual system becomes non compliant or fails as determined by the county. When this occurs, you will have to bare the costs of connecting to the system on your own. If you connect during construction, grant dollars pay for most of the installation costs. You will pay much more for connecting later. When in a subordinate service district, and you choose not to connect at the time of, by ordinance, you cannot replace, repair or expand you individual system.

**How were the** **service areas determined:** The committee looked at the 2010 comprehensive plan and based on that plan they determined what areas were the highest priority to organize at this time. We may combine districts as we continue with the process to maximize economy of scale. We can also add parcels outside the now defined districts by petition. Expansion capacity will be considered when designing the treatment system..

**Holding Tanks:** The County has only recently had an ordinance recognizing holding tanks as a viable system for wastewater management. Holding tanks are not fool proof and can overflow. Permits must be renewed every 5 years and have requirements for yearly reporting of pumping.

**Cost of connecting from your building to the grinder:** The public system ends at your grinder. The pipe that runs from your building(s) to the grinder are not on the public system and are the homeowners responsibility. The details of how these connections will be made once the system designed. For the Puck’s Point project, if the grinder was located within 10 feet of the existing septic (or holding) tank the connection was made as part of the project. If this was not the case, the property owner arranged and paid for connecting to the grinder.

**Challenges from Puck’s Point:** The construction process was probably most challenging for the property owners. The noise, and disruption and messiness of the construction process were beyond the expectations of many. After site rehabilitation and a little time most of the scars have healed and owners seem accepting of the final product. The township and engineers need to do a better job of communicating with landowners what to expect during the process. There have been minimal problems with the system since it became operational.

**Become involved in your district:** The service districts are jointly owned by the district property owners. The Township manages and operates the districts for the district members.Members in these districts are encouraged to become involved and stay informed as we move along in the process. Read the minutes of the meetings, ask questions, give opinions and talk with the committee members. It is your system. Be involved.

The Public Hearing adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Manninen, Clerk