

**MINUTES – ORONOCO TOWN BOARD
SUNSET BAY SEPTIC SSD PUBLIC HEARING
JANUARY 15, 2019 7:00 PM**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Neil Stolp opened the Public Hearing and turned it over to Sheila Craig.

Sheila Craig explained that Subordinate Service Districts (SSD) were governed by MN Statute 365A; explained what a SSD is, and the statutory requirements of creating one. Properties within the SSD are taxed in order to get a “special service”, in this case a septic treatment plant, that services only the properties within a SSD.

- This Public Hearing is a statutory requirement insuring that those affected have an opportunity to ask questions and voice opinions about the proposed SSD.
- Twenty three of the 25 property owners in the proposed SSD submitted signed petitions requesting the formation of the SSD. Signed verifications of the signed petition were also received from 23 of 25 owners. Statute 365A.04 requires a petition be signed by at least 50% of property owners in the proposed SSD.
- Signatures on the petitions and verification forms were verified by Clerk Lucy Shonyo on December 27, 2018.
- The creation of the SSD by the Oronoco Town Board must be approved, or declined, within 30 days of the Public Hearing. The Town Board will make the decision at their February 4, 2019 meeting.
- The Resolution to Establish the SSD, if enacted by the Town Board, must be published and sent to property owners within the SSD within 20 days of enactment. The SSD is established 60 days after publication.
- Before the effective date, 25% of property owners can petition to stop the SSD. If this occurs a special election would be held.
- A SSD that is in debt cannot be dissolved.

Sheila Craig and the Town Board listened and responded to land owner questions, concerns and support for the SSD creation.

How did this come about?

Wabasha and Olmsted Counties did an inventory of properties that touch Lake Zumbro/River and identified areas that pose an “imminent risk” to ground and surface water quality due to poor or substandard septic systems. These are not arbitrary standards. MPCA has approved.

One person present said they were told they “had to sign”.

The decision to sign the petition and verification form was voluntary.

Related to cost estimates and financing:

Cost projections are still estimates as the project is not yet designed or gone out for bids. Estimates are from the Community Assessment Report (CAR) compiled by Wenck Associates based on their experience with many other septic projects, including King's Park and Cedar Beach, both in Oronoco Township. The completion of a GeoTech survey will give engineers an idea of bedrock that needs to be dealt with in construction. The more rock the higher the cost.

Financing for Sunset Bay SSD residents is more favorable because this is a proposed joint system with Zumbro Township / Wabasha County. The more connections the lower the cost for all, and Zumbro Township's septic needs are more urgent than Oronoco Townships. Thus, the grant package is more favorable.

Related to Operation & Maintenance (O&M):

O&M cost estimates were compiled by Wenck Associates, project engineers. O&M fees are added to property owner's taxes, paid two times yearly. Property owners can elect to pay 100% with the first yearly tax payment. Other options are not available. As a point of reference, the property owners are charged 1.5% of which 1% goes to PFA and 0.5% goes to the township. Sunset Bay will be a larger and more complicated system so what this will be for Sunset Bay is not yet known. O&M fees are reviewed annually. O&M must cover routine operation and maintenance as well as future replacement costs. O&M costs start the first year of operation.

Related to future property development:

Grant money is meant to address current septic problems, not to enable future development. There is one chance to connect. There are no guarantees future connections will be possible, and no grant funding will be available to cover the costs if they are possible. There is no guarantee of new connections where a connection doesn't currently exist. This is per PFA, the funding authority.

Other:

For a summer home, when the water is shut off in the winter, shouldn't they be charged less than year-round residents? No, that would involve meters which increase installation costs as well as adding monitoring, recording and billing costs.

Could there be backups that occur when the home owner isn't there? There will be safeguards and alarms built into the system.

One grinder is needed for each home. Grinder sharing isn't an option per Wenck.

Other, continued:

Funding will cover removing or disabling the existing system, piping into the yard and to the house, and the grinder pump. Homeowner responsibility starts at the exterior wall. Before construction homeowners will be asked to sign an easement (blanket or specific) that allows placement of lines on homeowner's property.

Sheila Craig urged everyone to ask their legislators to support funding this project. Citizen voices make a difference.

Neil Stolp asked citizens to talk with homeowners in King's Park and Cedar Beach. Gopher Septic services these systems and is working on the licensing needed to service Sunset Bay. Gopher Septic has an excellent response time. Land still needs to be acquired and the Township "can't break the bank."

Ken Mergen urged participation as laws governing septic systems change. Holding tanks are still legal but not preferred.

Neil Stolp closed the Public Hearing.

Ken Mergen made a motion to adjourn at 8:20pm. Charlie Lacy seconded, motion carried 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lucy Shonyo, Oronoco Township Clerk

Neil Stolp, Chair, Oronoco Town Board