

Heart of the Valley Metropolitan Sewerage District holds community meeting

By Brian Roebke
Editor

A meeting to keep the local governmental organizations informed about the work of the Heart of the Valley Metropolitan Sewerage District was held on Tuesday, Oct. 28, at the Combined Locks Civic Center.

In 1974, Heart of the Valley Metropolitan Sewerage District purchased the City of Kaukauna treatment facility to treat domestic, commercial and industrial wastewater from the City of Kaukauna, along with the Villages of Little Chute, Kimberly, and Combined Locks. In 1983, Darboy became the fifth district member community.

That means all human waste that flows through toilets in those municipalities drains to the plant in Kaukauna, where it's treated and released as clear water into the Fox River.

District Director Brian Helminger told the audience there have been 164 new connections to the sewer system this year, so the district will assuredly exceed the average of 179 since records were kept in 2007.

Evolution was a word he used as a "theme" for the time the district is in. Of the district's 11 employees, nine of them have been in their positions less than two years.

Longtime Commission President Dave Casper is retiring at the end of the year after 32 years on the commission, with Bruce Siebers succeeding him.

Casper, who joined the commission in 1993, said it's been wonderful to work with such a dedicated group of people who understand the need to serve their citizens and cooperatively serve all the rate payers.

"I think our history as a thought leader, as an action leader, and as a cost leader, it speaks volumes to everyone's efforts," he said.

He said the commission is the tool giver to the fine staff at the

HOVMSD and it helps to promote ideas the community can dig into and work on.

He received a round of applause for his work all these years, something Helminger said people don't do these days.

Casper said unlike many businesses, what the commission is doing is planning for what's going to happen 40-50 years from now.

FOG update

John Stoeger of Stoeger & Associates gave a FOG update. FOG is an industry abbreviation for fats, oils, and grease, which can be a big problem because it can clog plumbing.

He said we should care because FOG causes capacity issues in sewers, is hard to treat, and is hard to get rid of.

"The FOG program is designed to get rid of the grease at the source," he said. "Let's get rid of it at the restaurants and the kitchens and such."

It's imperative those places install grease traps in their kitchens that are a tank that ranges from 10-5,000 gallons that encourages grease that comes in the water to float to the top.

"Over time you come and you clean it out and remove the grease to the landfill or the local garbage," Stoeger said.

Grease sticks to side walls, breaks off in chunks, and it breaks down very slowly in the treatment process.

They have a database that lists who has grease traps and when they're cleaned. It's worked well for the past 10 years but there are some challenges, with the biggest one being owner and employee turnover in restaurants because they aren't aware of the need to get this done.

Another problem is when firms that clean the traps refuse to let the HOVMSD know when they're being cleaned due to privacy concerns.

They've gotten around that somewhat by telling businesses there are other people who do the same work and might be easier to work with.

Interceptor rehab

Scott Schramm of Strategic Municipal Services gave an update

on the Interceptor Rehab Project that is 90 percent complete at the end of the second year of the project.

They started in the spring 2024 on Phases 1 and 2 on the east end of the project by the plant in Kaukauna. This year, they shifted into Phase 3 which was in Little Chute and by Labor Day moved to the Kimberly, Combined Locks, and Darboy areas for Phases 4 and 5.

"In the big picture, we are looking at substantial completion in the month of November," he said.

As a benchmark, about 90 percent of contractor pay requests are submitted.

Clearwater

Mike Gerbitz of Donohue & Associates gave the clearwater progress report, saying more than half the flow at the HOVMSD plant is clearwater but it's still treated to remove the human waste.

The industry standard is 40-60 percent, but the HOVMSD is within the EPA guidelines due to the old systems that are here.

It's ideal, but nearly impossible, to have no clearwater going into the sanitary sewer system.

The good news, Gerbitz said, is there weren't any blending events



Combined Locks Village President John Neumeier (left) congratulates Dave Casper, who is retiring at the end of the year from the Heart of the Valley Metropolitan Sewerage District after 32 years of service.

Brian Roebke photos

— where stormwater gets into the sanitary sewer system — in 2024.

The biggest driver of overflow events are rainstorms.

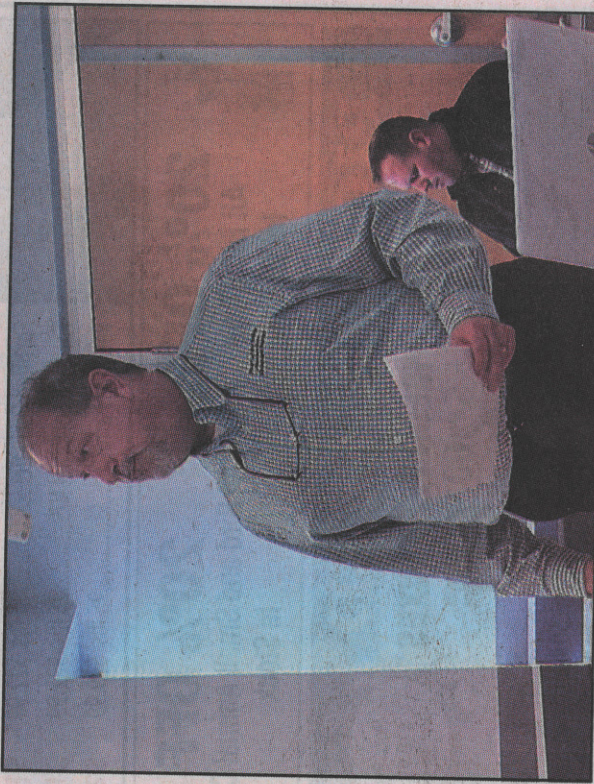
There are two ways clear water gets into the system, called I&I, for infiltration of groundwater that gradually seeps into the collection system, and the more insidious part of I&I is inflow.

"That's stormwater that gets into

the collection system quickly," Gerbitz said. "It usually get in through cracks in the manhole, sump pumps, or driveway drains."

The good news is the I&I did not get worse in 2024.

One example of I&I is when people direct eave troughs into the system, which was once legal but no longer is after the Clean Water Act in 1972.



District Director Brian Helminger

