

**Oneida County Sewer District
Steering Committee Meeting
April 20, 2016**

Steering Committee Attendees:

Gina LaMonte, Codes Officer, Town of Paris
Harvey Yando, Oneida County Representative
Ben West, Water Superintendent, Village of Holland Patent
Don Sroka, Highway Superintendent, Town of Schuyler
George Farley, Codes Officer, Villages of Oriskany and Yorkville
Rick Sherman, Town of New Highway Superintendent, Town of New Hartford
Chad Miller, Village of Oriskany
Don Mullen, Village of Oriskany
Ron Testa, Highway Superintendent, Town of Frankford
Phil Husted, Town of Whitestown
Richard Quigley, Codes Officer, Town of Marcy
Tim Hughes, DPW Superintendent, Village of New Hartford
Bruce Brodsky, Oneida County Representative

Oneida County Sewer District Team Member Attendees:

Steven P. Devan, P.E., Commissioner, Department of Water Quality & Water
Pollution Control
Karl Schrantz, O'Brien & Gere
Brian Whittaker, O'Brien & Gere
Amy Mowers, O'Brien & Gere
Nancy Pattarini, The Paige Group
Catherine Manion, The Paige Group
Shannon Rounds, The Paige Group

Summary:

- I. The Oneida County Sewer District is currently seeking sealed bids for the four construction contracts (general, electrical, plumbing, HVAC) associated with the solids handling upgrade project at the Water Pollution Control Plant. There appears to be a lack of local contractors willing to submit bids on various project components, particularly the smaller plumbing and HVAC contracts. Steering Committee members were asked to share this information with local contractors, as well as share contractor recommendations with Karl Schrantz from O'Brien & Gere.

- II. Public Awareness Survey Review
A public awareness survey was conducted in January 2016. The goal of this effort was to gather baseline awareness data to further inform the OCSD's Sanitary Sewer Overflow Mitigation Project's residential education program. The results of this survey were shared with the committee. These findings are specific to the Consent Order municipalities within the towns of New Hartford, Paris.

Key findings shared:

- a. The general awareness level of the "wet weather" causes of wastewater being discharged into the Mohawk River is strong at this early stage of the program, with 67% of all residents being familiar with causes of the problem.
- b. Overall, male residents are more familiar and informed than female residents about the causes of the wastewater overflows, the solutions to remedy the problem, and the laws prohibiting illegal discharges into the sewer system. About 30% of those surveyed are not familiar with the causes of sanitary sewer overflows to the Mohawk River, or measures they can take to help prevent those overflows. The 35 to 44 age demographic is the least informed on all issues and prevention measures. This data helps to guide outreach efforts, which will target the least informed demographics.
- c. Four messages were tested on how best to encourage residents to take action and disconnect their rain gutters and sump pumps from the sanitary sewer system. In the opinion of 40% of respondents, the most effective is that "It is the right thing to do for your community and future generations." The second most effective message was the warning of potential fines and not complying with the law, which was the top choice for 27% of respondents. This data is highly valuable in developing effective messaging.

- d. Among all respondents, 28% were familiar with the “rain barrel” and “rain garden” solutions to help reduce sanitary sewer overflows, and 26% were somewhat familiar. Overall, 32% of respondents were not familiar at all with these solutions. The most uninformed population groups include 38% of female respondents and 39% of respondents aged 65 and older. This data helps to target outreach activities by developing the most relevant message for each key audience.
- e. Nearly half, 44%, of respondents were familiar with the fact that cooking fats and oils contribute to sewer blockages and problems, while 20% were not familiar at all with this fact. The awareness that flushable wipes contribute to sewer blockage problems was slightly lower than the awareness for cooking fats and oils. Among all respondents, 38% were familiar with the fact that flushable wipes can cause problems, while 26% were not familiar at all. This tells us that overall fats, oils and grease (FOG) outreach efforts are having a positive impact. It also provides a strategic insight that the wipes education program, a more recent endeavor, will need additional attention over the next year.
- f. Among the media options to choose from, 40% of residents prefer to be informed through local TV ads, 21% by the local newspaper, 19% through social media and 7% through local Internet news sites or blogs. Only 6% would prefer to be informed through local radio, while 5% stated that they would prefer to receive a direct-mail piece. This information has served to guide the use of media in our 2016 outreach activities plan.
- g. Just under half of all respondents, 46%, were either familiar or somewhat familiar with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation consent order requiring the Oneida County Sewer District to complete repairs by 2021. Again, male respondents were more familiar with the legal action than female respondents by a margin of 14 points. Among all male respondents, 54% were familiar or somewhat familiar with the legal action compared to 38% of female respondents. This tells us that residents identify more closely with the mitigation program than the enforcement action.

III. Earth Day Public Information Events

Steering Committee members were encouraged to share information about and attend the following Earth Day public information events:

- Friday, April 22 – MetLife Earth Day 11-2pm (not open to the public but over 1200 employees will be in attendance)
- Saturday, April 23 – Oneida-Herkimer Recycling Center, 80 Leland Avenue Ext., Utica, 10-2pm

- Friday, April 29 – Munson William Proctors Art Institute Earth Day Celebration, Operation Ripple Effect educational materials and handouts will be available and on display

Steering Committee members suggested additional events for participation, including those focused on home and sportsman/outdoor activities. Members also suggested partnership with existing school programs and the Boy and Girl Scouts of America.

Public information materials including the 2015 annual report and Operation Ripple Effect™ rain barrel, rain garden, and Down the Drain rack cards were distributed to members in attendance.

III. 2016 Meeting Format Change

The Steering Committee engaged in discussion regarding the most efficient and productive meeting format for 2016. It was agreed that the best approach for the next several months would be to hold individual meetings in each municipality to allow focus on community-specific needs. Full Steering Committee meetings would still be held, as a forum for reporting progress.

Several Steering Committee members also requested that the consultant team provide brief presentations to town and village board officials to update them on the project. After that, smaller meetings with more detailed agendas could be scheduled as needed.

IV. Next Steps

Steering Committee members were asked to provide their next two meetings dates vial email to cmanion@paigegroup.com or by calling Cat Manion at 733-2313.