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## Committee: don't tackle Westridge sewer problem

Wednesday, July 21, 2004

By MATT SANDERS Statesman Staff Writer

The solution to the sewer problem at Westridge Apartments, formerly Grant II, probably won't come from the City of Dexter, at least not for the immediate future.

At its meeting Tuesday night, the Public Works Committee reviewed the possible cost to the city of bringing the apartment sewage, currently run by the Stoddard County Sewer Company, online to its own system.

After looking at the estimates, the Committee decided it will recommend to the Board of Aldermen that the city not take on the problematic sewer system, which until recently had been leaking 10,000 gallons of sewage per day on the ground at the apartments.

"It's unfair to expect the taxpayers of Dexter to take care of those people," said City Engineer Darryl Orr, who put together the cost estimates. "The taxpayers of Dexter should not be out one dime for those apartments. They're outside the city. And it doesn't mean we can't help them, but the taxpayers shouldn't be out one dime."

The total cost of bringing the system online was estimated at about \$168,000, which includes installation of a new pump station and force main. Since grant money is unlikely to be available, the funds would have to come from a low-interest loan and a connection fee charged to the apartments.

To offset the cost, the residents at the apartments would have to pay \$33.21 per month -- a rather high figure for sewer service, especially considering that residents currently pay about \$10 per month.

Many at the meeting expressed a great degree of doubt at the prospect of taking the system onto the city's sewer. Many repairs would have to be made to the aging system -- repairs the city would be responsible for if they failed in the future.

"Once we say we'll take that wastewater, we'll own that pump station," said Orr, referring to a part in the current system which is largely responsible for the leak.

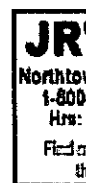
There was also a question as to the legal transfer of authority and financial liability over the system. A contract would have to be made ensuring the owners of the apartments fulfill their cost to the system -- a \$30,800 connection fee. However, it's unclear who



The Westridge Apartments sewer problem is too expensive for Dexter to tackle on its own.

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holds legal ownership of the system.

Ward I Alderman Jerry Corder expressed the sentiment of many members of the committee. "Let them do this themselves, or else you charge them for all the time you put in on it," he said.

Many on the committee concurred the only real solution that would be acceptable to the City of Dexter would be for the apartments to come on to the sewer system later as part of the proposed Stoddard County Common Sewer District Number One.

That district, located in Liberty Township, would assist the city in getting funds for the much-needed upgrade of its west lagoon, which is already running near capacity and servicing a growing area. Both City Administrator Mark Stidham and Orr have said the project would be a win-win situation for the city and the district.

The lagoon upgrade would bear a total cost of about \$1.6 million, with that being offset by a \$440,000 connection fee and the rest by a loan paid for through a rise in sewer rates by an average of \$3.55 per city user.

City officials made it clear that the move was something Dexter had to do, whether or not the sewer district comes online.

"This is something the city's going to be looking at doing in the very near future, anyway" said Stidham.

The committee moved to recommend the Board of Aldermen authorize Orr to proceed with a study of the upgrade to start the process whether or not the sewer district is formed.

An upgrade to the city's east lagoon will also be recommended, as more stringent regulations on the site may soon take effect. The upgrade would come at a total cost of over \$1.8 million paid for by a low-interest loan. The cost of the loan would be repaid by an average \$2.16 monthly increase per city user.

Or the project could be paid for largely by an economic development grant if Tyson makes plans to expand. The company currently dumps pretreated wastewater from its plant into the city's east lagoon.

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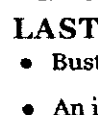
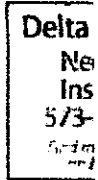
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