

## Mason County Onsite Sewage Advisory Committee

### Meeting Minutes for 03/15/2023

- 1. Call to order:** 5:03 pm at Public Works
- 2. Roll call and determination of Quorum (6 required)**  
Present: Constance Ibsen, Wes Graves, Ian Tracy, Rhonda Thompson, Thad Bamford, Kim Delaney, Dave Killoran, Keith Fuller, Paula Johnson, Dave Anderson
- 3. Guest Introductions:** Cindy Waite – B-Line Construction, Teri King – Citizen, Dave Anderson – MCEH, Cheryl Craig MCPH
- 4. Review & Approval of 12/16/2022 minutes:** Motion made by Constance Ibsen to approve meeting minutes as presented, seconded by Kim Delaney.
- 5. Public Comment:** Cindy said, when I'm looking for a record and it's been short platted and the numbers change it's difficult to find, the other day I had one and it was after the fact so there was no permit for it, the reason is because all the OSS, all PH stuff is scanned so if we can't find something it seems like someone should know – when parcel numbers change you're going what the heck? Keith says it's a systemic problem, it's a goof on the County to retire those parcel numbers. Cindy said they don't retire them, but it is a problem and I've brought it up before, but I don't know if you guys can do anything. Cindy said when this parcel changes, updating it at that time would solve this problem but I don't know if there's a way to do that. Keith said, every time there's a subdivision and new parcels, there's a problem. Cindy stated, for all departments I think it would be a great issue to address. Cindy said when you go into a short plat they refer into the mother parcel and that's how I find it in a recording. All building permits have not been scanned and sometimes you can go up there and find an old record sitting in the parcel file that has never been scanned.

Ian said, I've been aware of this issue for 5 months now. I've been working with the assessor's office to get this fixed and for them to notify us when they change parcels and I have not got much traction from them so far. One example is when there's 2 parcels, or what looks like 1 parcel divided by a state highway like 106, they're legally separated by the creation of 106 but they sometimes have the same parcel number, all they have to do is go to the assessor's office and say they want to sell part of it and the assessors go ahead and just create a new parcel number. I've made some headway with that but have not received any kind of records from them or notification when they change parcel numbers. Keith agreed that these parcel number issues are real and very critical. It was probably highlighted when I found about the issues of parcel numbers vanishing. I found out the planning department just realized that they're already legally separated and subdivided by a highway. County roads are not legal subdivisions they're easements. You can't get state waivers anymore for non-conforming lots, but local waivers. Constance said my understanding is that planning has started a big scanning project, could this help? Ian said no. They have started a 5-year scanning project so its many of thousands of tons of weight waiting to be scanned. It's going to be exactly what EH already has. Keith says this has

to be a problem many other counties and municipalities have experienced and there has to be a solution somehow... even taking the old parcel and not taking it and replacing it with an existing parcel. Cindy said that would be good cause if they had the parent parcel there, they could go into there and divide them up, but they make them dead and that thwarts it.

Teri King expressed, I want to recognize your team for the work you've been doing for septic repairs and hunting them down, I don't know if you'd had a chance to speak about JJ's work, about the 99 homes visited. Ian explained to the group, the large list of long time deficiencies and how JJ from water quality went to every single one of those properties. Fortunately, JJ's visits unveiled not a single failure and found that many were issues no longer occurring or already repaired and not sent to the County. Teri said that's amazing and I hope he can keep chipping away at all of those. I hope you're doing tracking of the metering to see how people are responding. I think the color coding is good, so you know what's happening there. I know you put craft3 information on those forms, right? The big mailing blitz does have craft 3 said Ian. Rhonda said we could probably add craft3 with the deficiency mailings as well. Teri said with the big push on gravity, are you going to offer education like workshops and things or is that off the table for now? Rhonda said Kendall was working before with homeowner workshops. W2 usually does that. Kendall left and is now at Thurston conservation district. Tessa Holleran is the new person now. She comes up from Lewis County so she is commuting. Rhonda said the last one we did was during covid and by Zoom and there wasn't a whole lot of outreach to advertise for it so it was only an 8-10 person turnout per. Teri said we should celebrate the success and work on these deficiencies. Ian said, on that note, we hired a Public Health Educator which is the closest we could get to a PIO position on the Community Family health side, but she works for the entire department. She's working on a bunch of media outreach and educational pieces including septic maintenance and water quality. There is work on making short videos and YouTube videos and what not, we do have a big public education push in the works right now. Paula asked how many repairs were done last year, 156 repairs Rhonda said, out of the 625 for 2022, Including tank only for repairs. Rhonda says we still have 2 vacant watershed seats that have been open for many years, PTSGA still vacant, they have a meeting early next month and will bring up at meeting to see if they can find a representative for us. Paula asked, what position does Jim have? Rhonda said, designer. So, probably this summer we'll be looking for another designer. Kim said she doesn't know her position anymore but Rhonda said I think you are a citizen for now.

- 6. County Updates: Repair Permits:** Ian said one item discussed at the last meeting was an issue with repair permits, and we did implement a solution, combining the repair and installation fee into one so it's all consolidated in one package. This helps us close repairs efficiently. Constance said, so it seems the issue was that it had to be paid before working on the permit, has that been instituted also? The answer is yes. It has worked out well.

**Staffing:** Ian updated concerning the EH department, stating we have been filling a lot of positions. In addition to Dave Anderson, we hired Andrea who is a full time onsite septic code enforcement and secondarily monitoring the o/m database following up on deficient reports. A

lot that is based on feedback from our MCCWD. We have been putting a lot of time into our staff finding deficiencies and addressing them. We will be hiring another person for solid waste code enforcement but that is more related to taking pressure off onsite septic code enforcement so they can focus on those septic failures and can spend the time needed on failures and corrections. Constance asked if Andrea has a code enforcement background or if she was trained and the answer is no background, she has been trained, though she does have hazardous waste experience and that is related. Constance asked Ian, so are you fully staffed now? Ian says no, I need a food inspector and just yesterday this solid waste code enforcement position was created which needs filled.

**Funding:** After July 1 there's probably going to be foundation for another position to be created and we're likely to get a water quality grant which will allow us to get another person. There's a lot of ideas floating around for building space to fit all of the new employees. Within next 7 months, we will be potentially adding 3 more staff, not including the food inspector. Constance said, public foundational health, what will the person do? Ian stated that the funding period ends June 30<sup>th</sup> and to spend that money we will need to add a body and it may just be someone who fills in wherever needed if we cannot figure out a program to put them in indefinitely. There's going to be excess funding and I will have to find a position for that. There are other ways we can use the foundation of public services money but at this moment it's enough to fund an FTE. Potentially, another way is that we can use it for maintenance on properties, i.e. holding 200k in reserves and using that for cleanups, but I don't know if that will happen. Kim asks, is that a use it or lose it type of funding? and Ian confirms that yes, it is. Ian spoke of a school inspection program, stating that the state wants us to do this, but that program is more complicated than the amount of extra money we would have. We don't know if that is the best way to go, or if it's feasible. The state is also talking about increasing the Foundation of public health services funding money for the next schedule. I don't know what's going to happen. Constance asked, so, at the state level they are going to be doing some rule making on pfa's and drinking water, anything like that and background information that would come to your department? Ian says probably.

Mason county schools aside, pfa's have been found in wells across Mason County. PUD 1 facilities voluntarily signed to do pfa testing and they found results and now know its toxic and must do something about it. There are several group A wells in mason county. Constance said, you could use the money to start getting ready. Ian said the problem is, if we need anything right now, we need group B oversight as there is no regulation on group B wells once they are established. Constance said that might be a really good use of funds. People often misconceive that their well water from private wells are perfect. Ian says its more than likely to be community system wells. He referred to an example of a recent case of firefighting foam contamination in a community well. Most residences shouldn't have it, hopefully, unless there's a contaminated source nearby. It is in a lot of water-resistant fabric treatments, also in all your fast-food packaging, all pfas. Mustard bottles are heavy in pfas. A group B program would be first step and then to start tackling regular things like sampling. Constance said, there's lots of ways to use the money and if we can use it for all these different things that'd be great. Ian added that the money needed for group B program would be enough for 3 FTE's for the first few

years, and there'd be a massive amount of work. After that period, we could scale it back. Most of the money going back to the state is earmarked toward the community and family health side. Most of my issues with spending EH money is staff turnover rate.

**Mailing Project:** Rhonda updated the group on the deficiency report mailings. She stated, they are done for now. We sent out 950 letters over 3 months. So far as of today, we have recorded 168 calls and e-mails, and only 29 still needed follow up, like if they were working on it or we needed an as-built. During those 3 months I also kept track of people who were just going and getting corrections without notifying the County and there was 65 of those. I'm estimating a 20-25% response rate. A lot of people are taking it upon themselves and doing the repairs. Now that those letters are out, we're going to switch over to doing about 3,600 regular maintenance reminders for people with gravity systems. This means that those without a pumping or inspection record since 2016 on their gravity systems are intended recipients. We are aiming for about 300 letters per week over a 3-month span. We are trying a quarterly schedule i.e. go back to deficiencies in 3 months, go to pressure systems, back to gravity maintenance, etc. This new mailing will be sent out on yellow paper. Our deficiencies are on green. Cindy asked, do you send out what you're doing to the o/m and pumpers beforehand, so they know it's coming? Rhonda said she did and will do so this time as well. Paula asked how many total designs did you end up at for 2022? Rhonda replied, 625 permits for sewage in 2022.

7. **Old Business:** Ian updated on old business, stating that the Board of Health approved our policy, and it is on our website now. Paula said that is so helpful to have access to. It helps set quality expectations up front and makes the process smoother.

**As-Built discussion from last meeting:** As she was not able to attend the last meeting, Paula wanted to take time to add to the last meetings topics. She gave input about the as-built situation, mentioning the e-mails through Smartgov saying your design is approved, this permit is closed, etc. She asked, is there any way to link through that system if they order a final, if it could tell us as designers? They usually do not alert us when they're going to start a job and next thing you know I'm rushing to get out there before they cover so I can make it. If we both, designers and county, get 3 days' notice we're going to make it. Right now, submitting a final request is done through our website or a phone call but we've had discussions about doing inspection requests through Smartgov. I'm not sure why it wasn't set up, but we have been talking about it. If we were able to, it would all fall in line. Ian said he started working on that 3 weeks ago. Paula explained that she wanted this to at least be on the radar. She said, another thing my installers ask about is the potential to maybe do virtual inspections, let's say on urgent repairs, the 3-day time window is tough, can this be internally talked about? Is there something preventing from using the system immediately before backfilling? Not leaving equipment on site for that long, Cindy commented, I've had 3 finals I've done after the health department has done them, and I've found problems, which frustrated me, so I don't know what the true answer is, like I've said before all on site people are going to find more on a system if they go out while it's being installed that's just the way it is, you can hide so much stuff. Paula would like to be alerted earlier, or to have a reminder to let designers know when you're starting your job, even

a timeline, I could make it out there, getting out there before its buried is a huge factor. There is a box on the back of the design form you check, and no one does it. Cindy says mine is on front of my design and the ones that don't, don't call me and I end up with as-builts and I've never even been to the site. At least on Smartgov I get an email when the county goes out says Paula. Some input I wanted to offer. Keith says, is that really installer education, educating the installers? Paula said I think it's just cracking down a little bit. We've had some real problems with installers not being cooperative at the end of a job and getting us information to close projects. Constance said, is there a reason why we continue to certify these installers who are being defiant? Ian said I'm very limited on what I can do with these installers, it's easy to enforce on illegal work, but if they are following the code, this stuff being discussed is simply bad business practice. We do regularly communicate with our installers. Your predecessor fines, I don't know if you're doing that, says Keith. Rhonda said those are probably for unpermitted installs. Paula said as soon as she hears from an installer, she has an e-mail explaining how Mason County works. The only way around it is install permits says Rhonda which is likely not a way we want to go. Some counties, the designer needs to stamp and say I'm allowing this installer to install my design.

WOSSA, said Paula, there's classes we can arrange to bring to Mason County for free education, Oscar just came out with xo2, a new product, treatment level A no disinfection and they said they'd be more than happy to do a free class or a couple free classes here if we coordinate it. Cindy said I went to that class, and it was a good class. The other class coming out, WOSSA's going to teach classes about the EH WAC update for free. So, I can find out more information on that too if you guys are interested. Education credits at no cost is a big deal. The Oscar class can get set up right away. That's it, just upcoming education opportunities.

8. **New business: By-laws:** By-laws, Ian said, these were approved by the committee fairly recently, in 2020, so essentially I wanted to bring it up this go around is to say these, Teri may have other information on the 95 consent decree, these by-laws were never signed off, this committee does not have authority to create and approve their own by-laws, one thing that they might change would be the who appoints the members. I think when Alex was here you guys worked on changing it to BOCC (Board of County Commissioners) vs the Board of Health appointing committee members and the Board of Health might like the BOCC doing it as they meet more regularly, but they'll need the opportunity to weigh in and give up that authority to appoint members. Representation of shellfish growers is written now, saying BOCC must appoint the representative of that position, which doesn't make sense as it's an industry position, industry created the representative, it doesn't make sense for BOCC to appoint this PSG position. These 2 things stand out to me. Everything else looks good.

Paula said, since we always struggle filling the watershed position maybe we can add an o/m position as we have pumpers and installers, especially since o/m is becoming a larger sector on our industry lately, and maybe have 1 or 2 citizens at large to allow us to be more flexible. Maybe we can shift these numbers to get some bodies in the seats. Teri added on the topic of

PCSGA, stating, I would say that probably in Mason County most are not PCSGA members, of shellfish growers, pools are small, but companies are large, for example, Seattle Shellfish is not PCSGA, so maybe do away with PCSGA and say they are representative of mason county. Taylor Shellfish is a member of PCSGA, Squaxin and Skokomish, also. I don't have a problem keeping PCSGA or even recommending they find someone. Yes, but it may be more inclusive and easier to fill if you just said shellfish industry representative. Paula agreed that the easier we make it to fill, the better. Ian says yes PCSG or no PCSG, Constance says just open the shellfish title and if PCSGA wants to apply they can do that. If we do have just a representative of shellfish industry, we can leave that open to who is appointed. Paula says who are we really looking for, for watershed? Cindy said just someone living in watershed with concerns about watershed. Constance said you want 13 spots as that's been established, so Thad is an inspector, right? Paula said he is o/m and installer. Constance said we really do need to have the o/m. Thad could fill o/m and we could get someone who does just installs. Why do we have 3 designers said Constance, Cindy said its very important as they know the industry throughout. Since no filling in water, Watershed might have to be moved to citizen position. 3 citizens based on commissioner districts and do away with watershed positions and do one o/m. Cindy asked if that was going to present a problem when we have Hood Canal water quality, as a citizen, county commissions are not divided up that way. Kim said, you can do citizen at large by watershed region or geographic region. Paula said could we combine those together, the watershed citizen at large that'd give us maximum flexibility. Doing it by commissioner district is easy, Paula said I don't know if we should even define it, maybe it should just say 3 citizens at large. As the issues come and go you see the interest perk up. Can you combine Oakland, Stotten and North Bay? Teri says no. Teri said, I would do one Hood Canal, but I'd tell you I'm hoping at the next OSS meeting with the downgrades coming, Lilliwaup coming back, issues at Skookum, Annas, Oakland bay is a 20 million dollar manila clam bed. Ian said, I think if we just change it to 3 mason county residents it will take confusion and complication out of watershed. 3 residents from mason county, then the one citizen would change to o/m. 3 top slots remaining, #4 changed to 3 citizens from mason county, then eliminating the 3 bottom positions and adding o/m. Constance says where does it state the board of health approves, it was explained that mason county code requires that, so it doesn't have to do with the document statement. Only thing was the membership breakdown change on the bylaws, everything else looks pretty good, Ian said who appoints the members may be the only thing zoned in on. Prior, the board of health were the same as BOCC says Cindy and that was confirmed. The state Board of Health recently required expansion to our Board of Health. It must be a person that uses Public Health services. The whole point of Public Health is that you're not serving just one person. Ian will make the changes to the by-laws and present to BOH. Their next meeting is in 2 weeks so hopefully there will be something to present after the next meeting. **Wes called for a motion to accept the by-laws as agreed upon at this meeting. The motion was made by Constance Ibsen and seconded by Paula Johnson. Approved, unanimously.**

Constance had 2 things to talk about in upcoming meetings, maybe the September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, I'd like to know about the king tides and if there's something we should do, anecdotally what happened and what you were doing, or if there's an educational pamphlet for those affected by king tides. I don't know if anyone had experiences with this last king tide, Wes said 2 Margaritas

in Union, we were scheduled to pump that day and the driver showed up and everything was full of water. A lot of people had to replace their air pumps on their pretreatment tanks, said Paula. Once they go under water, they don't work anymore. Thad said, I had a couple like that that were totally submerged, we reroute the airlines to a deck or higher area to try and prevent a failure there. Not much to do about tank positioning. Not a lot that can prevent water getting in when you have a vented lid. Ian said, our standard recommendation is to put risers above the king tide level. Same thing with wells, raise the well head above. \$600 is the estimated cost of the air pump.

Teri said, Paula, Rob Drexler from Belfair, Bill Dewey, Terri Holt, craft 3, Terri Jeffries, if you would be bringing in WOSSA, I encourage you to include the 3 mason county members that helped craft the rule.

Constance said, you don't think we need to put something together for properties of king tides? Cindy said, how would they know ahead of time? Constance said these will be occurring more often with climate change and I think nobody really knew what to do. Ian said we do a lot of education around shoreline properties and how to keep water out of your septic system, Cindy says if they had another king tide the receptionist at public health department can have a run down on what to tell callers. Ian said the biggest problem is so many transient property owners and the short-term rental issue, so many people are simply not here. Constance said we are all going to be getting ready for the growth management update and I'd really like to address, do we have any idea any data on how many septics and the density, do we know the volume that we are pumping, do we know that do we have, that kind of data. Ian says, are we talking about how much sewage pumped through the year? That's going to be Ecology data. Ian says, and pumpers also keep track. Rhonda says it may be available on OnlineRME. If you want to know how much bio-recycling is receiving, that'd be DoE data. Constance said, with growth, it'd be good to see a projection of how much more usage we expect to see. Once you came to a density of 4 houses per acre, there was a yearly inspection requirement of the system, I don't think we've ever done that, have we? Ian says, we do not do any enforcement on maintenance frequency right now. We don't have the capacity for that, we are focused on addressing deficiencies. If we get to a point where all deficiencies were taken care of, we could maybe focus that. MCCWD (Mason County Clean Water District) is geared toward protecting shellfish, shellfish beds, if we didn't have shellfish industry out in marine waters, we probably wouldn't have permits for septics anymore, just a thought. We must think, are these people out of town coming here a couple times a year really causing problems? Rentals, some Airbnb short-term properties, properties lived in year-round or large families are the main issues. Teri asked if our inundation prediction map is completed by the December meeting, would the group like a briefing? Thad says yes. This map shows where high tides could affect.

**Close of meeting:** Close of meeting Constance Ibsen, seconded by Kim Delaney, adjourned at 7:00 pm.

**Next meeting:** June 2023, in person at Public Works