

Mason County Onsite Sewage Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes for 06/13/2023

- 1. Call to order:** 5:02 pm at Public Works by Keith Fuller
- 2. Roll call and determination of Quorum (6 required)**
Present: Constance Ibsen, Ian Tracy, Rhonda Thompson, Thad Bamford, Dave Killoran, Keith Fuller, Paula Johnson, James Medcalf
- 3. Guest Introductions:** Teri King – Citizen, Dave Anderson – MCEH, Cheryl Craig – MCPH, Andrea Tubens – MCEH, Shane Maples – Citizen
- 4. Review & Approval of 03/15/2023 minutes:** Motion made by Constance Ibsen to approve meeting minutes as presented, seconded by James Medcalf.
- 5. Public Comment:** None
- 6. County Updates:** Ian updated that the Environmental Health Department is mainly fully staffed, and they are now hiring a Water Quality Specialist, hopefully before the end of the week it will be posted. In the last Board of Health meeting, the groups bylaws were approved. Paula's term was also approved for extension, another 3 years.

Mailing and Permit Updates by Rhonda Thompson: Last meeting we talked about overdue maintenance mailing project for gravity systems with no reported maintenance since 2016, the mail was sent out over the last 3 months and is now done. Now we will gear up for the next deficiency mailing. Constance asked what the response rate was on the 3600 mailings, and Rhonda said we did not monitor this one. Ian said we can check in a couple of months how it changed our rate, and Rhonda mentioned seeing an uptick in Homeowner Inspection forms being submitted. Constance mentioned that it was worrisome that on a Homeowner Inspection form anyone could check off the list and submit it with no proof, and Ian mentioned that this group can make recommendations to make changes to require education, etc for homeowner inspections. Rhonda said that Thurston County does a class to certify for homeowners who can inspect too. Ian said there's a clause for that too and it will not be free. We only have a 33% compliance rate as-is, so people don't really need to falsify this report as over 60% are already non-compliant to begin with. Increasing the rates of inspection would be the first step before requiring a class, and the 2nd step would be to start training if that was a path for this that we wanted to take. Constance asked if septic professionals go out and double check a homeowner's inspection, and James said he doesn't know if a homeowner says they've done an inspection if he's called out, and I always check RME service history before going. Rhonda says she probably does 100 a year.

In 2021 and 2022, by this point in the year, we had about 329 septic permits in 2022 and 343 in 2021. So far in 2023, we are at 246 permits, so it has slowed down quite a bit for our department in that regard. Constance asked why the slowdown may be, and Rhonda posed a

few possibilities such as inflation, developing issues, etc. Paula said that interest rates and inflation hitting all at once has people scared. Keith added that there is a significant decline in speculation building, which was rampant in the first half of the year and hung over into the second half because manufactured homes were on order and couldn't be cancelled, speculation building has really been paused. Timberlakes, Shorecrest, and places big for manufactured homes has been paused for now but I expect that interest rates are causing this. New construction seems to be pretty active, builders are still very busy, with backlogs. Rhonda said, we are pretty caught up and turn-arounds are probably 2-3 weeks, staying within that range, and the same goes for building permits. They are very staffed in the permit center too, EH is the last to sign off on most that I've seen recently, people are getting building permits within about a month.

- 7. Old Business:** Ian updated on old business, stating that the Board of Health approved our bylaws. We had to make a few minor changes, the appointment of members is one thing they changed, at some point this group made it so that the BoCC would appoint members of this committee and by code, it should be the Board of Health. Commissioners and BOH members said no, let's leave it with BOH appointing. So, it will be an every other month schedule. There are no problems with our change to the committee makeup, wanted authority to stay with BOH, that's about it. We updated some language like the document changing to Mason County Health Department to the updated new name, Mason County Public Health & Human Services, any questions? The group had no further questions.
- 8. New business: OSCAR-XO2 Training & Provider Workshop:** Rhonda said we are trying to sort out a date for these trainings, Paula is helping to organize this. The OSCAR-XO2 is a new proprietary system approved back in January, stream level A, I think it will be a really good system especially for repairs and tight lots, treatment level A. We want to give the training here at Public Works, our current proposed dates are July 18th, or June 27th. Paula mentioned the Tuesday evening so we can combine the Oscar training with the provider meeting. Rhonda said she wanted to put that on the agenda as something we are coining for next quarter. The first hour of the meeting will be about the OSCAR-XO2, and the 2nd hour will be the general provider update. If we need more dates further out, that should not be a problem. Paula said at this point, June 27th is probably too close. Keith asked if the installer/pumper portion of the meeting was mandatory. Paula said no, but they can get CEU's which are required, designers need a lot of them, and this is a way to get free ECU's. Ian showed the webpage of ordinance codes showing that installers need 12 ECU's for a 3 year period, and a certified O/M specialist needs 24 ECU's. Keith said that in summer, contractors and installers are super busy and having an education meeting then is kind of risky and a very busy time to choose – there are also vacations to be considered. Thad said that in the day, no one would show up but at night we would get some turnout. Paula said we have 3 approved OSCAR-XO2's now, and Shane put our first one in, I think they are going to be a lot more prevalent. Rhonda says this is why she thinks sooner rather than later would be better due to these factors, we can do the OSCAR sooner and the provider meeting later. Paula said that sounds better, I doubt all providers would show up to the first meeting so it would be good to make more meetings. Ian mentioned that we have over 4 pages of installers now, is there going to be a guideline like if an installer wants to put in one of

these systems, they need this training? Paula and James confirmed, yes. One employee comes out on first install (WOSA) to make sure everything is correct. Constance asked if we agreed on July 18th for the training, and Rhonda said if it's just the Oscar meeting, we will get back to you guys. Paula said if there are 1-2 county reps with a with a notice, we can set that up. If you want to pick other dates for a provider meeting in the Fall, I can book that with Jake too. What is a real defining difference or what's special about the OSCAR, is it's a low-profile mound system, very small and sleek and doesn't take much room. The testing process got treatment level A, which is as high as you can get, I think it will be a game changer as we can use it for waterfront repairs.

Septic Blitz Workshop: Rhonda said, in the past, we have done septic blitz every summer. We did it a little earlier this year. They went out to every door via direct mailing, just reminders of maintenance requirements. There are a lot of vacation homes in Mason County so hopefully they get it inspected while they are here, we also have some homeowner workshops, and we did it earlier so we could include information on our July 6th workshop on the mailer. Our first workshop will be at Public Works on July 6th from 5:30 – 7:00 pm, attendees must register with WSU. In the past, they do a 1-hour presentation and I give a small 15-minute presentation about maintenance requirements. What about grant money for rebates asked Paula. Rhonda said at the end of this month ends our grant cycle. Starting July, we will likely have more rebates. They are proposing \$350 instead of \$200. They are also posing an additional \$350 for adding risers and effluent filter, meaning \$700 if you do both. Paula asked, when more funds are available can you e-mail and let us providers know? Rhonda explained that the funds are so limited they try not to blast it, as we have some troublesome sites, we like to keep these funds available for who may not be able to get the work done otherwise. Ian added that additionally, the state has added a low-income requirement for about half of the rebates. Constance asked if there are any changes that we can think of to make the program smoother. Ian proposed an increase of 35 rebates versus 20 rebates with the increased amount for next year. WSDOH contacted him stating that they could give the increased funding if we prioritize half for low income. We don't have the capacity to verify income so I will have to see what that looks like.

9. **Good of the Order:** Paula wanted to discuss open committee positions so we can encourage people to apply. The group discussed what positions need filled. *Before discussing, Rhonda mentioned that Jim Henry's position is set to expire 7/28, and he was a designer:*

Open:

1 Designer

1 O/M

1 Citizen

1 Shellfish Industry

Paula also mentioned that she has been discussing with Rhonda the possibility of updating the permit extension policy. Especially within the last few years, we are seeing a lot of designs not being completed as quickly as they'd like and we encourage the 1 year, 1 time permit extension but it would be nice to have it be a 2-year extension instead. Keith asked to go over the current standards.

New designs are valid for 3 years, and are eligible for a one time, one-year extension. This leaves a maximum of 4 years, extension included, from when we inspect is how much time they have to install. A replacement system design is only good for 1 year, we want those to hurry, so there are no current extensions offered for those. I don't know if we want to change that, but the new construction policy would help a lot of people. When interest rates went up, some who qualified for their home loans lost their home loans and borrowing power. I'm just a fan of less paperwork and more time, Paula said. Proposing the idea of a 2-year extension... State code allows a maximum of 5 years for a permit. We cannot go more than 5 years. I am unsure of what the historical reason was to make this 1-year extension. Thad asked if it would have to go to BOCC. Paula mentioned that using the approval date instead of the inspection date would make sense. I have a job that was inspected 2 years ago and was waiting on planning, so 2 years were ate up just in waiting for approval. Using the approval date is fairer to the customer. Rhonda said, I don't want to sign off on something I inspected 5 years ago. There are code changes and tech changes to consider, like this new Oscar said Keith. Maybe the extension form can have the designer stamp, said Rhonda. Paula liked this idea, as designers are the ones who must stand by the design. Can we propose to change the 1-year extension to 2-years, that has to be submitted before the extension would be expired. Rhonda said we would just need to make sure we are staying within the WAC. Ian said that would take code change, the need to be submitted before the extension expiration, not the design expiration.

Constance asked if this would be typed up and brought to the next meeting. Rhonda confirmed. Ian said that if we can avoid doing a code change, it would be much better. So right now, it says permits are valid for 3 years from signature date of site inspection. If we comply with that, valid for 3 years, extensions are not prohibited in that language, you just need to stick within the WAC which is 5 years total. The other piece to this is only 1-year extension is policy change and at worst we can say OSAC has recommended an EH policy change for OSS permits, to extend to 2 years and still fall within the 5-year WAC. Right now, a permit for OSS would be 3 years, if at the end of the 3 years you need more time, if you applied for the extension, you would get 2 years instead of the 1 year, it'd be from the time of site inspection. Paula asked if those who have an existing extension can have their date be pushed out 1 year. Ian said there is no issue with policy changes, but he will have to talk to our finance manager and review possible financial impacts from the change. He may recommend two 1-year extensions, or maybe a change of fees. We will have to discuss.

Paula motioned to change the current 1-year extensions that must be applied for before the permit expires. She proposed the motion that permit extensions change to 2 years from the site visit date, and that extensions do not have to be applied for before the permit expiration date, just before the 2-year extension period would have passed. Also, current extensions would become 2 years instead of 1 year. Extensions must be signed off by original designer. Seconded by James Medcalf.

Call for vote: Keith called for all in favor of the proposal laid forth by Paula – Aye, no oppositions.

Constance stated that she sat out of the vote due to not having the proposition in writing.

The proposal will be taken to the Board of Health next month by Ian. If they approve or deny right then, I will update at the next meeting. James asked, if anything has to be tweaked, will you notify us? If it deviated a lot from the intent, then yes, Ian replied.

Paula brought up a separate issue due to administrative problems in the Public Health Department that started recently. Normally when a design is approved, the designer gets their copy within 2 days, and that has not been happening. You guys are so quick at urgent repairs, you'll approve a design within 3-4 days, and then we are not getting our copies sometimes for up to two weeks. This shows an apparent log jam on the new administrator's desk and it's bad. I've had designs lost completely, today I turned in an as-built on a job and as I turned it in I finally got my copy. There needs to be some training perhaps or redistribution of tasks. Ian said he will try to see what is going on with this issue.

Close of meeting: Close of meeting motioned by Keith Fuller, seconded by James Medcalf, adjourned at 6:32 pm.

Next meeting: Monday, September 11th 2023, in person at Public Works. Please note that the meeting will not be on a Tuesday like usual.