

Village to raise water rates, implement meters

Written by Deb Egenberger
Thursday, 21 June 2012 14:12 -

Changes necessary to move forward with lagoon project

With costly sewage lagoon repairs that have hung over the village for the past few years, Brady residents should not be surprised that trustees have chosen to increase the monthly village bill.

Still, it wasn't the easiest decision trustees made during their regular monthly meeting on June 13.

Residents inside the village limits have been paying \$50 per month for water, sewer and trash for at least three years without an increase.

The water portion of the bill will raise from \$21 to \$31 beginning with the July mailing, increasing the total bill to \$60.

"I know it sounds like a big jump," said village chairman Jeff Miller. "But I also think everyone saw this coming."

Raising the monthly water bill will generate roughly \$20,000 more per year.

The additional money will help pay for water meters, another unpopular but necessary decision trustees made at their meeting.

Natalie Furrow, community programs specialist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, told board members that low-interest funding for mandated lagoon repairs would not be available without a commitment to install individual water meters.

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“The big reason is conservation,” Furrow said. “If people have their water metered, they are more likely to be conscientious of their usage.”

Reed Miller of Miller & Associates Consulting Engineers in Kearney estimated the cost of meters at \$200,000 for indoor installation and \$400,000 for outdoor units.

Once installed, trustees agreed they could monitor water usage for several months and determine an average for standard billing with overages calculated individually.

“As much as people are not going to like it, we all knew this was coming,” said board member Todd Roe. “And we aren’t going to be able to do anything about the lagoon without water meters.”

Funding for the meters can be worked into the application to USDA for a low-interest loan to cover lagoon repairs, Furrow said.

In 2009, the village of Brady was ordered by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality to bring the sewage lagoons up to the current standard which allows one-eighth inch seepage or less per day.

The 2009 tests showed the lagoons seeped several times the allowable amount.

Progress toward a solution has been slow but trustees have now taken a leap forward.

In addition to increasing water rates and approving implementation of meters, the board also agreed to fund geotechnical engineering tests of soil in the existing lagoons and installation of a flow meter on the lagoon intake.

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Both will allow for more accurate data to be used in determining the remedy to the lagoon issue.

“I feel like this will show exactly what the village needs to do with the lagoons,” Roe said.

The board also voted to move forward with the USDA loan application. The loan application will be for \$1.5 million but the final amount will be tailored to the villages actual needs.

In other business, trustees:

received a request from the Brady Volunteer Fire Department to name the baseball field at Palmer Park after longtime coach and fireman Bill Gengenbach, who died in January. A dedication is intended during Brady Days.

learned the community funeral committee has disbanded with \$1,200 in the bank. Former committee members would like to use those funds to purchase a television for the Community Center. No action was taken by the board.

agreed to schedule a meeting of the village health board to consider nuisance/hazard declaration of a residential property at the corner of Popleton and Main streets. The procedure is necessary prior to pursuing legal action against the property owner.

voted to rezone property owned by Duane Davis at the southeast corner of the intersection of Mathewson and Commercial streets from residential to commercial. Trustees also received a verbal agreement from Davis to construct some kind of privacy fence along the street side of the property.

passed on first reading an ordinance to vacate the alley on the east side of houses on the end of Popleton Street. The ordinance will have two more readings.

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opened a bid for \$1,000 from Ross Widick for the old city hall building at Main and Commercial streets and decided to invite Widick to the next meeting to discuss his plans prior to accepting the bid.

approved a special designated liquor license for the Hitchin' Post for a wedding reception at the old restaurant building on July 7.

allowed Denise Shoults of North Platte to host dance classes in the Community Center. She conducted similar classes at the center several years ago.

authorized the transfer of \$21,386 from a certificate of deposit designated for sewer use into a savings account.