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# The Flash

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# VILLAGE OF WARREN PLANNING WATER AND WASTEWATER UPGRADES

BY TODD NIELSEN



WARREN, IL - Warren Mayor Kirk Raab states that the Village Board of Trustees, Village employees and he are looking forward to implementing several much needed water and wastewater infrastructure improvements. The Village has prioritized four water and three wastewater system upgrades. Working with Community Funding & Planning Services and Fehr Graham, the Village of Warren has submitted applications to the Illinois EPA for infrastructure loans for the projects.

"We started with a list of 12 projects and had the water/sewer operators prioritize from most important to least. From there, we identified seven projects to put in the project plan for the Illinois EPA," said Mayor Raab. "Based on affordability and the loan forgiveness, we'll either add or scale back. You put everything in your project plan so, in the future, if more grants become available, you can qualify. If the items are not in your plan, you will not qualify for the funding."

"Not all projects have to be pushed forward in the next year," Darin

Stykel, Project Manager at Fehr Graham, said. "It's a five-year window."

Raab stated that it has been approximately 20 years since any major project has been completed, therefore the infrastructure improvements are much needed. The last upgrade on the wastewater system finished in 2005 and the last major upgrade with the water system was in 2003.

Four of the seven proposed projects are for the water system. They include village-wide water main valve insertions, which will number about 20 throughout the village. Water main and street improvements on Pearl Street, from East Main Street to Hyde Street, are the second proposed project. This upgrade includes about 2,100 feet of water main replacement including all the appurtenances that go with it and about 4,600 feet of road replacement. The Village is also proposing a portable wellhouse backup generator that will serve three wells and two lift stations. The final water system project is wellhouse electrical upgrades to all three wellhouse sites. Most of these well-

houses have not been upgraded for years and the electrical is not up to code or extremely deficient with corrosion.

"We want to put insertion valves around in some bad areas where we have water main breaks," Water Superintendent Dan Long said.

"That would allow us to shut off areas where we have a water main break, so we don't have to shut off half the town," Sewer Superintendent Scott Raisbeck added. "We can shut off a small area — a block or two — so we're shutting off maybe 60 people instead of hundreds."

"The system is old, so it's rather lacking in valves. When there are issues, they've been trying to deal with them while in service and it's extremely difficult to make repairs that way," said Stykel. "It will give them increased serviceability and help them with flushing and routine maintenance with the system."

In addition, there are three proposed wastewater system projects. The first is sanitary sewer improvements on Pearl Street, totaling 1,400 feet of sanitary replacement. Village-wide sanitary sewer lateral and manhole lining is the second proposed project, totaling about 59,000 feet of sewer main, about 700 laterals and 238 manhole rehabilitations. The last proposed project is a bar screen addition and small building to house the bar screen at the wastewater treatment facility. This upgrade is needed because it is currently a manual system and the new system will be an automatic debris removal system.

"The sewer system in town was put in during the late '30s, early '40s so most of the system is clay pipe," Raisbeck said, speaking on the village-wide sanitary sewer lateral and manhole lining. "With clay pipe, there's a joint every three to four feet and those joints are leaking. When the soil is wet, it takes water in and runs it to the sewer plant. When the soil is dry, it leaks out. When the pipes are leaking water, the roots are going to find their way in. If you don't want to excavate all the lines in town, they have a thing called sliplining. They shoot a liner down through the middle of the pipe. It adheres to the inside of the pipe and seals up all the joints."

"Warren gets a lot of inflow and infiltration from groundwater infiltrating in," Stykel stated. "When we get large rain events, the inflow at the plant is much heavier than it normally is, which is a very costly item to the village because they are treating clean water, essentially."

"[Mayor Raab] came to me and said Warren is in need of several infrastructure projects," said Jill Pepin, Community Planner at Community Funding & Planning Services. "They created their list and we got Fehr Graham involved with estimates. I said that I think the EPA would be a good funding source for these projects. So, we put together a project plan, we did a financial review on the Village and, from that, we put in applications. We've got everything submitted to the EPA that we need to have submitted to hopefully be on the intended funding list on July 1st,

2023. If we are on that intended funding list, we'll know what our interest rates are going to be for both loans—and those rates are locked in—and the forgivable amount we'll get off those loans."

Mayor Raab says the idea for planning so many projects is a perfect storm of money and grants becoming available. "It's not very often that you get low interest loans, forgivable money and American CARES Act money all at one time. The CARES Act money was the first part of it, which we used to pay Community Funding & Planning and Fehr Graham for all the work they've done so far."

"One of the ideas behind doing so much work at once is because of some of the funding programs out there right now, but also the Consumer Price Index of goods is going up very rapidly in the water and wastewater world," Stykel added. "So, a dollar spent now might be \$1.50 in five years. The industry is showing about a 15% Consumer Price Index fluctuation right now, which, when you're talking about millions of dollars of work, can add up pretty quickly."

"The EPA will look at a couple of things," Pepin said. "They'll look at Warren's operating and maintenance to make sure they have enough money coming in to operate and maintain the systems. They'll also look at the cost of the projects and how much is needed to pay back the loans, so what the impact to users will be to be able to complete these projects and make the payments on the loan. For both of these projects, payments probably will not start until 2025 at the earliest, but we would need to increase rates now so we have a little bit of surplus leading into the payments."

Stykel says projects similar to this are being done by many communities throughout the state and nation.

"A lot of communities are having problems with all the projects that need to take place because rates have been artificially low for years. While other utilities were raising rates, water and sewer were held relatively flat in most communities so they're somewhat underfunded."

"These two departments are required to be self-sustaining. They don't receive tax dollars. I believe that is very important for the residents of Warren to be aware of, if they did not already know," Mayor Raab added.

"They have to be sustained off water and user rates, not general funds," stated Stykel.

The Village of Warren is planning an informational meeting about the project to be held on Thursday, February 2nd at 7:00 p.m. at the ambulance station. The Mayor, Village Trustees, Village employees and employees of Community Funding & Planning Services and Fehr Graham will be available to take questions about the proposed water and wastewater projects from the public.

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