

**Elk Rapids Township**  
**Summary of Special Sewer Informational Meeting, February 11, 2020**  
**Proposed Project Down Cairn Highway from Wandawood to Spirea Drive**

The informational meeting of the Elk Rapids Township Board was held at the Elk Rapids Government Center located at 315 Bridge St. Elk Rapids. The meeting was called to order by Supervisor Amos at 6:00 pm. This meeting was recorded.

**Present:** Supervisor Dorance Amos, Clerk Shelley Boisvert, Treasurer Mike Szymanski, Trustee Aaron Isenhardt and Trustee Richard Hults

**Also Present:** B. Derman, M. Zimmerman, A. Nordman, B. Muma and 15-25 members in the audience.

1. Meeting Called to Order/Pledge of Allegiance
2. Introduction – Supervisor Amos
3. Project Summary – Aaron Nordman, Performance Engineering
4. Legal Perspective – Matt Zimmerman: Varnum Law  
and Bill Derman, Township Attorney
5. Question and Answers: Submitted on cards:

**Q) S. Rehrer, 8323 Cairn Hwy** - Is there an opt out option?

**A) Zimmerman:** once it is decided that there is project, a special assessment district is set up and all the parcels in that district that are within 200 feet of the sewer will be mandated to connect to it. Before we get to that special assessment portion of this there will be more meetings and three public hearings. It is at that time that the people in that district can decide to opt out so if there is no longer over 51 percent of the property owners that are in favor of the project, the project itself may not happen.

**Q) S. Rehrer, 8323 Cairn Hwy** – Q) What is the estimated township property tax increase and monthly cost?

**A) Derman:** There is no tax increase that would go along with this. There will probably be and increase in the sale price value of the property. The monthly cost would be the flat rate monthly township sewer fee which is currently approximately \$53.75 a month.

**Q) M. Pollister, 8543 Cairn Hwy** – What is the benefit to property owners with good septic systems? Do we have to hook up? Can we check our septic's to see if they are good or bad?

**A) Zimmerman:** If the project goes forward, then it wouldn't matter if the septic is good or that is not failing, you would still have to connect. That is the only way to make the numbers work for everybody, and that is what state law provides for. In the long term, even if the septic is good now, history shows that at some point it will fail and the State has a better confidence in a maintained sewer system.

**Q) M. Pollister, 8543 Cairn Hwy** – Is there a conflict of interest? There are properties owned by Dorance and Julie Amos where there is a main line, through an easement from Cairn Hwy up to the plant.

**A) Amos:** That proposed easement is not set yet but that seemed to be the best and shortest route up to the wastewater treatment plant. Amos stated that both he and his wife own property in the Township and this should not be a conflict.

*Zimmerman:* Under State law, elected representatives are not required to not participate in local government decisions that affect the health, safety and welfare of the entire citizenry, including them. So they don't give up their rights as citizens when they become a Township Board member. The fact that there is a Board member that owns property in the district does not have any effect on the engineering or the legal questions about setting up the district or any of the costs. There is no connection between the two.

**Q) N. Veliquette,** Due to his experience on his property he does not believe that water levels are up and causing issues with septic as was claimed by the engineers.

**A) Nordman:** There were no hydro-geological studies done here. He was generalizing what they see in the area and on his particular property the water level may be fine. The levels were not the reason to propose this sewer system.

**Q) not signed :** Does the district make the decision or do the landowners get to vote whether we want the system?

**A) Zimmerman:** The Township has had a policy to not require a district if the majority of the property owners do not want a system. He believes that policy will still be the case.

**Q) How do we vote on that?**

**A) Zimmerman:** What has been done in the past is someone has volunteered to take the lead and circulate a petition or a deadline has been set where property owners can come in and sign yes or no, but it is not done at the ballot box.

**Q) How many connections would Wandawood have?**

**A) Muma:** At this point we believe there are 12 structures that would need to connect. Amos asked Derman to explain the percentage we would need to move forward on a petition.

*Derman:* The policy in the past has been listen to property owners, if there is enough support we ask the property owners to go to their neighbors and sign a petition to establish a special assessment district. If there is more than 50 % of the property owners in favor then the Board starts the process to establish that district. That includes multiple hearings, who's in the district, how are you going to prorate the cost within the district. The Township does not usually start that unless there is interest because there are costs involved for engineering and legal that will be necessary.

**Q) T. Stites, 8056 Cairn Hwy –** Why are there deed restrictions. If there are 200 foot restrictions is Pollister's Point required to hook up?

**A) Zimmerman:** Pollister Point is in the sewer district. The 200 foot mandate comes from the State Law and that is from the property line. Any property within 200 feet of a sewer main has to connect to that sewer.

**Q) What side of Cairn Hwy are we looking at?**

**A) Muma:** Right now we are planning on the lake side because most of the connections would be on that side which will save money when we put in the service leads, and the Road Commission told us there would be more room in that easement for sewer.

**Q) T. Stites, (continued)** What is the maximum distance from the line that would require you to hook up?

**A) Derman:** The requirement is 200 feet from the sewer to the property line but on the private property there are going to be varying distances from the houses to the front property line where the service lead will be.

**Q)** Why are higher elevations from the lake required to hook up?

**A) Muma:** Once the sewer is installed everyone has access and is required to hook up.

**Q) C. Baskins, 7827 Cairn Hwy** – What if it is a vacant lot?

**A) Derman:** You are still part of the district and liable for the cost of system. You wouldn't have to buy the pump package because there is nothing to connect to the system at this time.

**Q) T. Stites, 8056 Cairn Hwy** – How many residents are in the project?

**A)** Per the original mailing we are assuming 64 connections but that may change once we get into this more.

**Q) Audience,** Do we know how much it may cost to get a contractor for making the connection to the system?

**A) Nordman:** The Township use to have a list of contractors that can do this work. The cost will vary based on property but an estimated cost would be around \$3000. The ideal situation would be if the contractor installing the sewer could also do the connections because a lot of this will be directional drilling. At this time though we can't say that will happen.

**Q) B. Loper, 7827 Cairn Hwy:** Is there going to be any gravity sewers where we wouldn't need a pump? Some of the properties along there are high enough that they wouldn't need a pump.

**A) Muma:** There was a small area in the district where gravity may work but it would only be for a few homes and then a larger lift station would be necessary adding possibly over \$100,000 to the project and only benefitting a few of the properties.

**Q) Audience,** Many of the homes have to utilize pumps now to get the sewage from the house to drain field. Would those pumps work?

**A) Nordman:** No, the pumps you are probably using now are only pumping liquids but for this a grinder pump or sewage pump would be necessary to get all the waste into the sewer system. You may be able to utilize your existing piping but will need to change out the pump itself.

**Q) Audience,** Am I correct in assuming then that the total cost is going to be over \$20,000? Which is adding the cost of the system you gave plus the connection cost.

**A) Amos:** Yes, with the estimates and numbers we have right now you would be correct. We will be able to get a better count if we move forward. The cost may be able to be amortized over 10 or 20 year period. That would be discussed with the people in the district further.

**Q) Audience,** For houses that are closed up, would they still need to pay that monthly cost?

**A)** Yes

**Q) Audience,** What happens to peoples existing septic system? Do they get abandoned and is there a cost for that?

**A) Nordman:** Yes, normally the excavator making the connection would also pump the septic tank or crush it as part of the cost for connection. Most people don't remove their drain field.

**Q) Audience,** What is the whole time frame we'd be looking at?

**A) Boisvert:** The process wouldn't even begin until the Township receives a petition showing interest but after that the Township would start working on it. Engineering and design would start; there would be at least three public hearings held, which would mostly set up the special assessment district. Once there is project, the engineers would go out for bids, which they like to do in the winter time so that maybe the construction could start in the spring. We'd be looking at least a year from this summer before a project would be done.

There will be more meetings. If you think of more questions you can call us or email us so we can find you answers.

**Q) Audience,** Has there already been a list or a petition started of people that may be interested?

**A) Boisvert:** Not at this time. This was really just a meeting to give and receive information from people along Cairn Hwy. We were looking to see if there was any interest. We'd like to have more meetings and we could have petitions at those meetings so neighbors would not have to go door to door.

No more public comment and no further discussion from the Board. Amos thanked everybody for coming.

We will plan to have another informational meeting near the Memorial Weekend hoping people will be back from their winter homes.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:14 PM: Audio of this informational meeting is on our website: [elkrapids.com](http://elkrapids.com)

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