



West Branch City Council
City Administrator's Report
12/16/19

Pending Action Items:

(Wastewater Topic)

(DNR Unfunded Mandated Process)

Back in November of 2018, the Wastewater Task Group recommended moving forward a pilot project that enhanced our current lagoon system. The task group visited several projects that used infusion technologies that enhances levels of dissolved oxygen for increased biological activity, the Baldrige process used this method but at a 80% less expensive rate/price and this local homebased company came with a money back guarantee (if the process did not work). The process also resulted in enhanced sludge digestion by the enzymes (also known as "bugs). Again, a benefit for the city even if other levels were not met. We anticipated (we hoped) the sludge reduction through this process would also result in lower levels of Ammonia, E.coli, and BODs. (Biochemical Oxygen Demand).

In addition to the usage of aeration technology, Baldrige Environmental also used a patented enzyme injection as a potential solution for our wastewater treatment process. The treatment timeline was delayed due to the unusual / record breaking cold winter. However the pilot started in spring 2019 and despite heavy rains (also a factor not conducive to the process) positive indicator were exhibited. Signs of sludge break-down and accompanying data soon highlighted the importance of this technology and its effectiveness in lowering ammonia (NH₃) levels and raising dissolved oxygen (DO) quantities, both highly desirable outcomes.

The summer and fall months showed indicators moving in right direction shining a light on the positive usage of the Baldrige Environmental enzymes. Wastewater logs detailed the pre- and post-treatment comparative data. Overall, all findings indicate significant drops in ammonia levels and more desirable changes in DO levels. As of November 2019, the city reviewed our lagoon readings and sent samples to the lab (our normal process / required by the state) and all indicators showed that we were in compliance with the new state required levels. To be clear, these results are within our 2022 compliance thresholds. The levels we weren't expected to meet before the installation of the SGAR process.

To use our "Hail Marry" analogy the pass has been thrown, the pass has been caught in the end zone; now we have to wait for the referees to review the instant replay before a final outcome can be called. In this case, DNR are the referees, and like a head coach we may have to fight to force this technology discovery to be recognized by the regulating state agency; thus allowing us to avoid years of rate increases.

Next Steps:

Currently, V&K is gathering the data collected and will make overtures to DNR requesting flexibility in the city's time line regarding the facility plan and SGAR treatment process. At very least we would like time to expand on the pilot project to get more data before spending hundreds of thousands of ratepayer dollars on design work, and/or millions of dollars on construction. This may take lobbying our state representatives and appealing to the Governor's Office to allow the time we need to show DNR the Baldrige approach works.

(College Street Bridge)



The ribbon cutting Ceremony for the opening of the College Street Bridge done. There are a few remaining items, but the project is expected to be ready for final acceptance at the January 21st meeting. There are a couple of loose ends that need to be tied up. For more information please call Eric.



If you have any questions, comments, or concerns; please do not hesitate to contact the city's project engineers.

Dave Schechinger, P.E.
dschechinger@v-k.net
319-466-1000

Eric Gould
egould@v-k.net
319-466-1000

(Cubby Park)

Completed - However the expense of fixing the small drywall issue may need to be done in-house and deducted from the final retainage.



West Branch Splash Pad



Report from the Desk of the City Administrator:

- Administration is still looking into the viability of the \$100,000 Community Catalyst Grant. It is intended that this program could help the city's efforts in the downtown east redevelopment site. I will visit with ECIA regarding a potential partnership in preparing a potential grant.
 - Pre application Jan 31st
 - Application April 17th
 - Awards Announced in August 2020



ECIA believes that we can make a case that the overall redevelopment efforts undertaken with this property will considerably enhanced the downtown east redevelopment project with site control of the property.

A discussion item will be on the Jan. 6th agenda.

- Note: We also have a \$50,000.00 contract approved for the removal and reuse of concrete from the site. Additionally, we accepted two quotes for a total \$1,899.00 to deconstruct and/or demolish structure A and B on the site. We plan to have this phase of the redevelopment project completed by June 15th 2020.
- Short-term and Long-term Disability Benefits

Follow up / Reminder Items:

- Still working on Nuisance Enforcement Letters
- Still working on New Garbage Renewal Process
- Capital Improvement Reserve Levy – passed (will be used to present a stable tax rate).
- I Met with the Iowa Great Places Committee, and requested the committee to consider two potential projects that potentially could be the center point of our next Great Place Grant Application. 1) Funding for splash pad with theme that could tie in other water features around the county; and/or funding for digital tourism kiosks network that will tie-in local sites, businesses, and tourist venues.



Digital tourism kiosks network

This was met with luke-warm support by some of the smaller communities, but they promised to bring it up with their city councils. There was a representative in attendance from the Great Places staff, and she believed the Kiosk proposal would need to be tied with some larger project.

Splash Pad

Feedback from Great Places staff has indicated that splash pads have not done well with regard to funded projects. They indicate that the grant committees would like to see projects that are artistic and relay a sense of history that is unique to the community it is located in. However, splash pad were not ruled out as a possible projects (They just have not been funded to date).



Coming Events:

- Christmas Holiday – Dec. 24 and Dec. 25
- I will be giving the MLK Key Note at St. Ambrose University Rogalski Center – January 20 2020.