

SACHEEN WATER & SEWER DISTRICT AGENDA

- I. Greet and Overview Agenda - please put your name and questions on notecards being distributed by my son, Ben; detailed questions are best addressed at a W&S meeting or by contacting Joni Stillian, District Manager.**
- II. Introduce Ourselves; Overview Personal and W&S Physical Infrastructure**
- III. History and Background of the W&S District**
- IV. The Budget and the Levy in a Nutshell**

SACHEEN WATER & SEWER DISTRICT AGENDA

V. AquaTechnex and Lake Treatment

VI. What the W&S Board Can and Cannot Do and the Community

VII. Q & A Time

VIII. Closing Comments - we will be available to chat afterwards for a bit

Streamlined Approach - but you can see your copy for more

Question Protocol in Maximizing Time

- A. Please include your name - no anonymous questions, please
- B. The question is not redundant with what is already in our FAQ per our handouts.
- C. The question is deemed to be of some general interest to the assembly as opposed to specialized or overly technical

While we will try to answer your questions, please understand that we are unpaid volunteers rather than full-time bureaucrats or W&S experts and we may not know all of the answers!

You are encouraged to email or call Joni or come to one of our meetings for detailed and technical concerns. We are also willing to stay after this meeting to chat further.

Thank you for your understanding and support!

I. GREET and OVERVIEW AGENDA

- A. As stated earlier, we are the Sacheen Water and Sewer Board; a junior governmental entity with levying capabilities but a rather narrowly prescribed range of responsibilities and power - more on that later.
- B. Along with the SLA, we are the only organized entity in the community - and we take that responsibility seriously.
- C. We believe in our community - and that we need to come together and do our part to uphold and protect a high quality of life here at Sacheen.

GREET and OVERVIEW AGENDA CONTINUED

D. The challenges we face are seemingly increasing such as development and growth, invasive species, fire danger, water conservation and so forth. While Ben Franklin's comment that "We must all hang together, or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately," was obviously in a very different time and context, there is nonetheless some figurative truth in that quote for us as a community today.

E. We already overviewed the agenda and, again, in the interest of efficiency, we would ask that you submit any questions by notecard for the Q&A session.

II. Introductions - Personal and Physical Infrastructure of W&S

A. Who are we and why are we here? We are a team.

i. **Joni Stillian** **District Manager** jssacheen@jmail.com

Hours are M & TH 10 AM - 2 PM in the Hwy 211 Fire Station.

Office Phone: (509) 447-4641

ii. **Paul Sexton** (509) 671- 6019 for service

Maintenance Technician

iii. **Shaun Bleecker** shaunbleeks99@gmail.com

Volunteer Commissioner

Introductions - Personal and Physical Infrastructure of W&S

A. Who are we and why are we here? We are a team.

iv. **Randy Carasco** randysacheen@outlook.com
Volunteer Commissioner

v. ***Rod Griggs** beelineautomotive@comcast.net
Volunteer Commissioner

ALL OF THE BOARD MEMBERS ARE UNPAID VOLUNTEERS SO, in the words of Adele, GO EASY ON US, PLEASE!

B. Physical Infrastructure in the Sacheen area entails servicing 310 residences with everything needed to make things flow smoothly - hopefully.

III. History and Background of the W&S District

A. Deep History Before Construction (much like certain lake deposits back then, no doubt)

i. Initial attempts to establish a sewer system LID in the 1970's were, unlike Diamond Lake, flushed.

ii. In the late 1980's, the Sacheen Water and Sewer District was "reactivated" in an effort to address "restoring" a lake that was increasingly choked with mil-foil to the point that many people were struggling to swim and boat in and out of their docks. Studies and work were undertaken which culminated in iii below.

III. History and Background of the W&S District

A. Deep History Before Construction (much like certain lake deposits back then, no doubt)

iii. In the mid-1990's, the great Sacheen Mil-foil kill off occurred as a nearly million dollar grant from the Washington State Department of Ecology supported that effort.

a. As a condition of the grant, Sacheen W & S agreed to establish and maintain public access to the lake which became the Myers/Harter Wildlife Refuge and is named after two families that did a great deal for the Sacheen Community.

b. This led to the establishment of the ongoing levy to maintain funding for lake treatment.

History and Background of the W&S District

A. Deep History Before Construction - continued

iv. Along the way, starting around 1991 and led in more recent years by Don Hill and his band of muckrakers who have quite literally done the dirty work, the W&S District also ran point on navigating the bureaucratic channels with hydraulic studies, state permits and securing and paying for land access in mitigating beaver issues and enhancing outlet waterflow in order to LOWER the LAKE LEVEL and lessen shoreline damage. Keeping up with those dam rodents has been a challenge but with the drought and dropping water levels there might now be more of a need to leave it to the beavers and maybe go after nutria - seemingly the Eddie Haskell of the aquatic rodent world.

History and Background of the W&S District

A. Deep History Before Construction - continued

v. No doubt, there have been many people who have selflessly given of their time and energy in the past with regard to water and sewer issues in bettering the Sacheen Community including but by no means limited to Darrell Abbott, Ralph Dravland, Betty Myers, Elinor McMurray, Gary Garrett, Mike Quick, Peggy Johnsen, Dick Materne, Perry and Sheila Pearman, Ron and Renee Schmidt and Delores Welin. Needless to say, any list of this type is rarely going to be truly complete or avoid inadvertent omissions and we acknowledge that many other people have played a key role in building the community and we thank them as well as the people mentioned above!

B. Construction and Aftermath

i. From 2010 to 2014, a renewed drive to establish a sewer system was undertaken as the Sacheen W&S LID was approved and reams of studies, neighborhood chats, paperwork and preparation occurred.

ii. Ground for the sewer system was broken on June 20, 2014 and construction was completed on September 29, 2015.

After forty years of intermittent attempts and a few bumps in the road along the way, the Sacheen W&S Sewer System had come to fruition!

iii. After overseeing this herculean task, the Pearmans, Peggy Johnsen and Gary Garrett stepped aside in the late 2010's. It would be impossible to overstate the massive contributions that they have made to maintaining and improving Sacheen's quality of life!

IV. Budget Stuff in a Nutshell - see FAQ for Detailed Info!

A. Our yearly budget is about \$168,000.

B. In theory, the levy part of the revenue base is intended to support Milfoil/invasive species treatment, maintenance and caretaking for the Myers- Harter Sanctuary, W&S District insurance, salaries and beaver mitigation/lake level efforts. However, the truth is that - as is oftentimes the case with peas, mashed potatoes and gravy being mixed on a kid's plate - the perception of rigid fiscal separation in terms of where one item stops and another begins in terms of M&O or levy funding sources is really more of a matter of semantics than discrete reality.

Budget Stuff in a Nutshell - continued

C. That being said, the salient point is that about 25% of the W&S District's effective operating budget is dependent upon the levy.

D. In the event of another levy failure as happened in 2018, mil-foil treatment would be the first to go. At that point, we might have enough to muddle through but it is possible we would have to raise rates to cover salaries and operating expenses.

E. About 85% of your monthly payment (\$151.41 of the \$178.41) goes to service \$9 million in loans that were taken out to get the W&S system going - only \$27 goes to our operating expenses.

There was also about \$5 million in grants, by the way.

Budget Stuff in a Nutshell - continued

F. As these loans will not be paid off until 2036, there will be no significant rate relief until then.

G. The payments are what they are because of construction overruns due in large part to unanticipated granite related drilling issues and environmental regulations and laws evolving and becoming more stringent during the process.

While it may not be perfect or ideal, sometimes, life is like a watermelon and it is important to spit out the seeds!

Budget Stuff in a Nutshell - continued

H. For those of you wondering about accountability, we are watched over and audited by the county and the state and we have no bank account or petty cash as it all goes through Pend Oreille County. This is what makes us a “special purpose” junior governmental entity much like a fire district.

So, even if one of us did want to mine that Sacheen stream of black or brown gold (methane gas, maybe?) to set up an offshore account in the Caymans and expatriate to Costa Rica, well, good luck with that. Also, as was mentioned, our budget is \$168,000 a year so I don't think anyone is going to go all Lori Isenberg anytime soon.

Budget Stuff in a Nutshell - continued

I. To our way of thinking, a budget that depends upon what is essentially a sunset source of funding - the levy - for sustaining day-to-day operations is less than ideal or stable but it is what it is and we are doing our best to stay lean and efficient. That being said...

J. Ideally, we would like to find a way to establish say a \$30,000+ rainy day reserve fund in the event of another levy failure or unforeseen challenges but this may not be feasible.

K. Also, as you probably know, inflation and supply chain issues are raging and much of the W&S infrastructure is starting to age and break down. Accordingly, while we'd love to avoid a rate increase and to tell you one will never be necessary, we need to tell you the truth in that it may.

V. AquaTechnex and Lake Treatment

A. As mentioned earlier, Sacheen W&S has been responsible for arranging lake treatment since the 1990's.

B. We currently rely on AquaTechnex for this service and - while we certainly negotiate on behalf of the best interests of the ratepayers - we rely on their professional expertise in terms of treatment.

C. Also, it should be noted that some species that have become dense in areas of the lake such as large-leaf pondweed are NATIVE rather than invasive and therefore cannot be treated.

D. On a somewhat related note, we resumed water testing last year and it was found that e coli and other various elements of concern were all at acceptable levels.

AquaTechnex and Lake Treatment

E. As of late, we have found them highly responsive to our needs and concerns and the recent treatments have yielded great results.

F. Our focus, like AquaTechnex's, is to see treatment that is best for the Sacheen Community and lake as a whole and we hope and trust that you agree! When it comes to that, we trust their professional judgement.

G. We depend on the levy to fund lake treatment. The amount spent in recent years has run from \$22,000 to \$30,000 depending upon the need and how much money we have available which is generally about 1/3rd to 40% of the levy.

For those of you who are interested in learning more, we will publicize when Bradley Roth from AquaTech next attends a W&S meeting. We have also sent out information by email and will try to do so again this year.

VI. What the W&S Board Can and Cannot Do and the Community

A. Over the last two plus years, we have been asked to oppose county level zoning changes and development, express concern to P.O.C. about water table issues, express concern to P.O.C. about fireworks use and regulation, address airbnb operations, force trailers to hook up and more.

B. Unfortunately, these are not concerns we can address. We are a junior governmental entity which is not to be confused with a greater Sacheen grassroots community advocacy organization.

Legally, we can only act and give input when P.O.C. or developers come to us and want to access our system and resources - that's it.

What the W&S Board Can and Cannot Do and the Community

C. In fact, if we were to attempt to expand the narrow parameters of our legal power, that would raise potential conflict of interest concerns and we would be putting the W&S District and - by extension - you the ratepayers, in a position of potential litigious vulnerability so a big no thanks on that! **Talk about rates going up ...**

D. As for enforcement regarding new construction to hook up, etc., that is through P.O.C. and its permit process. As unpaid volunteers, I am pretty sure that none of us are willing to grab Mr. Smith and Mr. Wesson and go tell people they have to hook up. If that's what you expect then ***No, no, no, it ain't me, babe, you're looking for!***

What the W&S Board Can and Cannot Do and the Community

E. A few recommendations and observations if we may:

i. To our perception, there is a huge need in the community for grassroots activity and organization. In the years to come, issues such as drought, lower water tables, invasive species, balanced development and fire danger are only going to become more acute and there is a growing need for us to come together to effectively address these needs as a community.

ii. Entities such as P.O.C. respond to numbers - they count votes and it is that simple. If you want to impact policy, you have to be organized, proactive and have numbers.

What the W&S Board Can and Cannot Do and the Community

E. A few recommendations and observations if we may:

iii. While a junior governmental entity such as Sacheen W&S cannot do this, private citizens and organizations can and we would encourage you to step up and help in creating and executing a vision of WHAT IS BEST FOR THE COMMUNITY!

iv. Sure, it takes time, organization and money but our community needs it and is worth it!

What the W&S Board Can and Cannot Do and the Community

F. Ask not what your community can do for you ...

G. Friar John and the American Dream

VII. Q & A Time

A. We will address questions as time permits

B. We will also hang out afterwards for a bit

C. Feel free to email with questions; we will do our best but please remember we are unpaid volunteers with full-time plus other responsibilities

D. You are always welcome at our meetings; second Wednesday of each month, 5 PM at this fire station.

VIII. Closing Comments - we will be available to chat afterwards for a bit

We hope that our presentation has been informative.

Thank you so much for coming; it has been our pleasure and privilege to interact with you!