



July 10, 2017

**RE: sanitary sewer petition for Blue River Estates Community**

As you may be aware, the Whitley County Regional Water and Sewer District (Whitley RSD) hosted a public informational meeting at Columbia City Christian Church, 270 Frontage Rd, Columbia City, IN 46725 on June 26th to discuss the possibility of extending public sewer into your area in an effort to eliminate onsite failed or failing septic systems. I did not see your name on the sign-in sheet from the meeting. Therefore, this letter is being sent to you to summarize the meeting and keep you involved in the process.

**Summary regarding current situation:**

Thomas Nitza of The Secant Group, LLC and Lana Beregszazi of BCS Management, Inc. presented options for septic relief solutions in your area and answered questions for the group. Since there is a documented infraction in the area with the Whitley County Department of Health, there needs to be a sanitary sewer installed or homeowners determined to be creating the problem will need to replace their individual onsite septic systems. The following summarizes the options presented and discussed at the public meeting.

There are two potential methods for pursuing the sewer extension process. The first option is for residents to submit a sewer petition request to a sewer utility, in this case the Whitley County Regional Water and Sewer District. The second option is for residents to hire a private engineer and contractor to bid the work. The third, and less common option is for each resident to individually install new onsite systems.

**Solutions - Option 1 (sewer petition)**

Under the first scenario, once the Whitley RSD receives a sewer petition, the board members formally commission their consultant engineer to study the area. This study will include alternatives for connecting at different locations through a variety of methods. Some of the options that are researched include gravity systems, gravity system with a centralized lift station, low pressure force main with individual or shared grinder pump stations. The engineer's study

will generate a cost estimate for the potential mainline extension from the existing sanitary sewer to the petitioning area via the various available options. Once this estimate has been completed, a public meeting will be held with the residents of the affected area to discuss the proposed project and associated costs.

**It will be extremely important that each homeowner take the time to attend this meeting. When the meeting has ended, each homeowner will be given an opportunity to decide if they would like to continue to move forward with the sewer project according to the information that is presented.**

If a study is completed, we will pass out an individual survey sheet at this follow-up meeting for each homeowner to sign either in favor of, or against the sewer project. If there is enough homeowner support and the Whitley RSD Board agrees to move forward, the remaining steps are:

1. Whitley RSD bundles this project with several other project areas together in one package for an application of financing through the Indiana Finance Authority – State Revolving Fund.
2. Whitley RSD authorizes engineers to perform final design engineering.
3. Whitley RSD engineer obtains any necessary easements to construct the sewer.
4. Whitley RSD receives approval of the financing for the project by IFA-SRF.
5. The approved project design is sent out for competitive bid.
6. Whitley RSD engineer obtains a construction permit from IDEM and approval by a local treatment provider to connect.
7. The bid contract is awarded to a construction firm.
8. Whitley RSD sets a sewer rate for the area based on the total combined treatment and project costs.
9. Contractor begins construction of the sewer system.

This process will begin only after the residents sign and submit the initial petition. Signing the petition does not guarantee that a sewer will be constructed but serves an initial, formal request from residents. You will still have an opportunity to turn down the project later when the survey form is presented at the cost study public meeting.

The key advantages to working with the Whitley RSD include our ability to obtain low interest (typically less than 3%) financing for the cost of engineering design and sewer construction. This also allows homeowners to pay back the project cost over a 20-year period - thus providing an alternative for each homeowner who cannot afford to pay for their portion of the project cost up front. In addition, the entire health hazard from this area can be resolved with one project rather than several individual sewer replacements.

### **Solutions – Options 2 (sewer via private engineer and contractor)**

The second option is for residents to collectively hire an engineer to design a sewer extension from the existing sewer to the properties. The engineer would coordinate with the wastewater treatment providers. The engineer would also obtain the necessary construction permit from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. Upon receipt of all approvals and permits, residents would then hire a contractor to install the sewer and then connect the homes to the new main line. Under this scenario, all financial arrangements between the engineers, the contractor and the residents would be handled privately. One advantage to this process is that it can happen more quickly than petitioning the Whitley RSD. However, in this scenario, residents are responsible for funding their share of the project cost up front.

### **Solutions – Option 3 (install new onsite systems)**

Another option is for homeowners to procure and install their own new septic systems on an as needed and required basis. Note that a majority of the septic systems in the area are no longer up to Indiana Department of Health standards and requirements. If the Whitley County Department of Health receives any complaints then they will need to dye test the area for contaminants, which could lead to an infraction requiring resolution. We have included a copy of typical septic system installation and maintenance costs in this packet for your reference and consideration.

### **Current petition**

You will note that a petition has been enclosed with this letter. If you would like the WHITLEY RSD to pursue a detailed cost study, **you simply need to sign the enclosed petition and return it to the Whitley RSD by August 10, 2017.**

When the petitions have been compiled, the Whitley RSD Board will make a determination on whether to pursue the cost study according to initial interest. The Whitley RSD will send a letter to all of the area residents detailing the Board's decision to proceed or not with the cost study. If enough support not materialize then the DOH will need to follow up on any existing complaints.

Thank you in advance for your participation. Please complete the petition and return it to us in the enclosed envelope.

Sincerely,

Lana Beregszazi, BCS Management, Inc.  
Managing Director  
Whitley County Regional Water and Sewer District

cc: Whitley County Health Department  
The Board of Commissioners of Whitley County  
Thomas Nitza, The Secant Group, LLC

Attachments: Petition for sanitary sewer initial cost study  
Pre-stamped Return Envelope for petition  
Blue River Estates Meeting Agenda  
Typical Sewage System Replacement Cost Sheet