

UPDATE ON WATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

I thought that I might take a little time, and update our readers on the progress that is currently being made on our City's Water System Improvement Project. Joe Parman, of the Lexington News, has done an excellent job, in the paper, of covering the steps that we have been making with our water project, and I want to reinforce some of the things that he has been writing about.

At the present time, we are in the process of contracting with an Engineering Firm to oversee our project. We have received a resume with qualifications from 5 very reputable firms, and a group of City Council members, along with some members from our Citizen's Water Committee, are reviewing the qualifications, and in the coming weeks, they will interview Engineers from each firm. The Engineer that we bring on board, will be a very valuable resource, as we explore and evaluate the different options for improving our Water System.

We are currently looking at a wide array of options for improving our water system, and we are trying to take our time in looking at all possibilities, as we want to make sure that we get it right. To give you an idea, we are exploring such concepts as a Private-Public Partnership, a Design Build Project, a Design Bid Build Project, as well as other options. Bear in mind that even though we are looking at a variety of different options, our overall goal is still the same, as what we communicated, when we went through the process of educating the public on our plans for improving our water system. Regardless of how we choose to get it done, we still plan to construct a new Water Treatment Plant, East of Lexington, and we plan to drill 2 or 3 new wells, and convert from surface/river water to ground/well water.

Many of you have probably heard that our City has been approached by Missouri American Water, a large company that has expressed a possible interest in purchasing our Water System. American Water has already purchased numerous water systems throughout Missouri, as well as other states. Officials from this company have indicated that they might be willing to purchase and take over our Water system, construct the new Treatment Plant, replace any bad water lines in our water distribution system, absorb any debt that we might have incurred, and possibly keep our water rates at a very competitive level. We don't know if any, or all of this is possible, or if American Water will be willing, in the final analysis, to actually make an offer to purchase our system. We also don't yet know if we would be willing to sell, but we feel that we needed to at least listen to what they have to say, and see if this might be the best option for our City. The only commitment that we have made to this company is that we have agreed to furnish them with comprehensive information about our current water system, so that they can make an informed decision. If the City Council would decide that selling to this, or some other company, is the best option, it would have to be approved by City voters.

This is where we are at the present time, and we will do our best to keep you informed, as we continue through the steps of improving our Water system.