

City of Milton
Water Issues Focus Group Meeting
6:30pm Wednesday, April 13th, 2005

Facilitator: Mike Haas

Participants: Bruce Lippincott, John Berg, Todd Hesgard, Joe Gill, Shawn Wenzel, Chris Lukas

NOTES

1. First of all, John Berg seemed to get the impression that the group was assembled simply to criticize his department, but the group wanted to make clear that it was only searching for answers. There were a lot of questions for John because he was the only participant with the technical expertise to give background on specific issues or possible solutions, and the group appreciated his participation.
2. Water taste still appears to be the #1 complaint with some participants feeling that most Milton residents do not drink City water because of the taste. Todd Hesgard noted that Dave's Ace sold about 80 replacement filters last year.
3. John Berg stated that impurities in the water give it the taste and that low circulation is thought to be part of the problem. Water may remain stagnant in a line, for instance, when schools are not in session. The group discussed the impact of residential development which increases water circulation. John said the City is making greater use of directional flushing this summer and that when it was initiated, rocks were found in a water main apparently from when it was built in the early 1970s. Directional flushing is very time consuming because of the limitations of the infrastructure.
4. John also stated that most proposed solutions cost more money, either in labor or treatment costs, without a guarantee of a noticeable difference in water taste. He discussed options such as ozone purification and ultraviolet purification, both with significant initial costs and maintenance costs, and that chlorine treatment is the most cost efficient method for a pressurized system. He also indicated that the department often receives complaints too far after the fact to make a judgment regarding cause. Some participants thought the water taste issue is partly a public relations issue and that residents who are convinced of a taste problem may not recognize any improvement. Other participants felt that there is definitely a strong taste problem.
5. The group noted complaints that City utility bills are too high, but also recognized that water rates are not as high as Edgerton's. Milton's rates seem high in comparison to Janesville which has the lowest water rate in the state and 3rd lowest sewer rate. Also, two-thirds of the utility bill is the sewer charge. The group discussed changing to a system of monthly billing. The consensus seemed to be that monthly billing may seem more regular to customers but the group was skeptical that it would reduce complaints about the cost of utility bills.
6. The group was not aware of any problems with water pressure, with the Fire Department and Tomah Products indicating there is usually no problem with water pressure even with heavy use.
7. The group did not feel it had the technical expertise to recommend specific solutions, but encouraged the City to continue to monitor and address complaints about water taste in the community.