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Fayette to pursue millions for water, sewage infrastructure

By James Pletcher Jr., Herald-Standard
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Fayette County will pursue more than \$200 million over the next decade to improve its water and sewage infrastructure.

Fay-Penn Economic Development Council has released the Fayette County Sewage and Water Project Report for 2001, which identifies 69 sewage projects totaling \$173.7 million and 59 water projects totaling \$32.9 million, all in 42 municipalities.

"This report identifies all the water and sewage projects that exist in the county," said Robert Junk, the Fay-Penn employee who is responsible for maintaining the county sewage and water project report.

"It shows what we haven't done in the past 30 years," Fay-Penn Vice Chairman Robert Eberly said, adding that the county has been "sitting on it's a (expletive) for that long. It's time we get these things done."

Junk agreed, showing maps of existing sewer and water systems. Apart from more densely populated areas, most of the county does not have public sewer systems.

Water systems fare better, but only in the western half of the county.

"There still needs to be some work in the eastern half," Junk said. "We will need this infrastructure in place if we are going to attract new businesses or even get people to live here. This is our future and it's an investment we need to make."

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Fay-Penn President said the study does not into consideration a proposal by the Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County to take more water out of the Youghiogheny River.

"We did not take that into consideration because we are still waiting for a final report from the Army Corps of Engineers on that proposal," Krajovic said.

"The 2001 sewage and water report identified a number of projects completed during the past year as well as the addition of several new water and sewage projects planned for the future," said Junk.

He added that, although the costs for the replacement of old lines were not included in the scope of this project, it was widely recognized that there is a need for line upgrades in the county.

"We don't have a handle on what that might cost right now. It's something we will have to determine," he said.

This year's sewage and water project report includes a change to the categories identifying the projects' completion years. Those identifying completion year category changes are as follows: existing service areas, 1-3 years (2001-2003), 4-6 years (2004-2006), and 7-10 years (2007-2010). Junk presented the maps to the Fay-Penn board showing the changes in identifying the completion years. The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) maintains the county water and sewage maps infrastructure database.

Sixty water and sewer projects, worth a combined \$147.6 million, are included in the 1-3-year group. In the 4-6-year group, 27 projects, valued at \$34.1 million, are listed, and in the 7-10-year group, 40 projects totaling \$24.9 million are planned.

"The need for new sewage and water services, as well as the need for the expansion of existing sewage and water services, is evident throughout Fayette County," the report states.

"Although there has been progress over the years in infrastructure development, the lack of proper sewage and water infrastructure continues to limit the county's ability to grow.

"It is widely recognized that the future of the county's residential, commercial and industrial growth is dependent on the investment in infrastructure," according to the report.

"I am very excited to see all of the water and sewage projects that have been completed and the number of projects that are targeted for completion in the next 10 years. This is a good indicator that the county is moving in the right direction and preparing for future growth and opportunities in the county," said Fayette County Commission Chairman Vincent A. Vicites.

"The steps that are being taken now will have a positive impact on both the environment and development potential of Fayette County for the next 50 years," said state Senator Richard A. Kasunic (D-Dunbar).

To complete the report, Fay-Penn conducted 76 meetings with municipal officials, their engineers and representatives from water and sewage authorities.

Fay-Penn officials also worked with representatives of the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority and the Fayette County Office of Zoning, Planning, and Community Development.

"In 2001, Fay-Penn decided to collect information on current and future infrastructure projects from all municipalities in

the county. This report is an update to the original sewage and water report released in 2000," Junk said. "The purpose of this report is to obtain accurate, current information on all existing sewage and water infrastructure projects in the county, to share the information with all communities and to encourage cooperation between community leaders in securing funding for these projects. This report will also help in identifying the future water and sewage needs of Fayette County."

Krajovic thanked all involved in compiling and giving information for the report.

Fay-Penn is mailing copies of the report to the municipalities, authorities and agencies that help with the development of the report.

Anyone who wants a copy of the report should contact Fay-Penn at 2 W. Main St., P.O. Box 2101, Uniontown, 15401, e-mail info@faypenn.org or phone 724-437-7315.

A \$25-per-copy fee will be assessed for the report, which will help defray the cost to produce it, Junk said.

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