

Ask for O.M.B. hearing in sewer, water debate

The Rockwood and Area Ratepayers' Association have asked the Association's legal counsel to prepare an appropriate brief addressed to the township council and the Ontario Water Resources Commission asking for a hearing in front of the Ontario Municipal Board regarding the proposed plans to build a water supply and sewage treatment system in Rockwood.

Almost 200 ratepayers from the village, adjoining area and Eden Mills listened to and asked questions of two representatives of the O.W.R.C. at a meeting which lasted almost four hours Wednesday evening and had some testy moments.

Grilled were Gordon L. Van Fleet, assistant district engineer of the division of Sanitary Engineering, and Charles E. Letman, executive officer of Project Development, both of the O.W.R.C. Also attending was Jack Grimason of the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit.

Association president Richard Strong chaired the meeting which was set up to answer questions about the proposed plans. The association has charged the O.W.R.C. is withholding vital information about the proposals.

Reviews history
Mr. Van Fleet reviewed the history of the proposal from the time tests were first taken in 1966 up to the present, explaining the limestone formation on which Rockwood is situated, with its many cracks and fissures, allows surface pollutants to seep into ground water and contaminate wells. He attributed the fact that not all wells are contaminated because the water flows as rock is channelled or canalized with varying degrees of hardness.

Mr. Van Fleet said the problem of well contamination could be solved by reducing the number of wells to one under a waterworks system.

Wouldn't it be simpler to clean up the contaminated wells? asked a ratepayer.

People careless
You cannot correct the wells if the ground table is polluted, was the answer. It would be possible to chlorinate each well and it probably would work for a short time but people become careless after awhile and neglect the chore—than you are back where you started.

Under a one or two well system, the village could control the quality of the water by chlorination and filtration. Tests would be conducted each day to ensure the water was potable.

Because of the fissures and channels in the rock it was impossible to say where the pollution originated. It could come from as far distant as Everton or Acton.

Always pollution
Has the water in Rockwood always been polluted?

"That may very well be," answered Mr. Van Fleet. "The old swimming hole might have been as bad then as now but we didn't know it then," he explained.

Mr. Van Fleet subtly pooh-poohed suggestions that Rockwood people could boil all their water to make it potable. He warned if Rockwood wanted to go for the minimum system rather than the safest, there could be hazards involved.

Surprisingly, the O.W.R.C.

engineer cited backhouses or privies as one of the most effective methods of treatment for human waste since there were no large volumes of water involved.

"Contamination from outhouses is very small," he told the crowd of ratepayers. He doubted that people would go for the return of the outhouse, however, admitting at the same time that it would probably clear up many problems.

Is there any way of rectifying Rockwood's problems without a sewage plant?

If lots were all 15,000 square feet, said Mr. Van Fleet.

Breakdown?
"If there is a breakdown at the sewage plant, would the emergency standby pipe dump untreated effluent into the river?" was the question.

Only under the most extreme conditions, like Hurricane Hazel or the type of weather which hit Sudbury recently was the answer. He said by-passes are built into the system, but hopefully never to be used. There is standby power he explained to handle emergencies at all pumping stations.

By-passes brought an Eden Mills resident to his feet charging the plant would be dropping gallons and gallons of "sparkling clear effluent on Eden Mills" in such a case since the effluent was to go downstream from Rockwood. "If it isn't good enough for the people in Rockwood it is not good enough for the people of Eden Mills," he noted.

Are available
Asked why ratepayers were not able to get more information on plans and specifications, Mr. Van Fleet said some information was of a confidential nature but plans were available that ratepayers could understand. Other data was

of a technical nature which untrained people would find useless.

At this point the village secretary, C. F. O'Brien stood on his feet to say plans had been in his office for weeks except for two days one of the association's directors had borrowed them.

The water table is polluted—47 wells impure—and although no one has suffered stomach aches they could wake up one morning with 200 people sick.

"How long are we going to have to wait for remedial measures?" he asked the meeting.

Other considerations
Mr. Strong replied that no one wants to live in a village where water was contaminated but there were other considerations such as cost and protection for township residents. He said he couldn't understand why the government hadn't the courtesy to let residents see plans for the sewage plant, which were not available from Mr. O'Brien.

Residents have a moral obligation to protest when sewage is being pumped around the conservation area. "We are paying a lot of money to pump around the conservation area," he said.

He also took exception to dual sewage lines to take the effluent along Harris St. and back to the sewage plant which would be situated on the north side of 7 Highway on the west side of the village, where an outlet would take it to the river.

Needled by Mr. Strong's remarks about not being able to see plans, Mr. Letman of the OWRC said Mr. Strong had been given the opportunity to see the plans but had not taken advantage of the opportunity. Costs for the project had been advertised as well as a breakdown of costs.

He said the consultants had been asked to design a sewage plant which would put the sewage down below the conservation area because research told the O.W.R.C. this was the only feasible method of handling the problem.

At this juncture, John Gots, an engineer, arose to ask why the village did not put in water system and sewage pipes now but wait until later to build the plant. He predicted the system could cost as much as \$3 million if it is postponed too long.

Mr. Letman reminded residents that the O.W.R.C. was not trying to "force the plan down anyone's throats" since the village trustees had requested the study of the area and this had been done with no cost to residents.

Water samples are again being taken in the village to corroborate samples taken earlier.

Investigate lagoons
Questioned about alternative systems, Mr. Van Fleet said the OWRC had investigated the lagoon system but ruled it out because of the problems with surfacing limestone. There was one suitable site but the farmer wanted hundreds of thousands of dollars for the land.

He reiterated Mr. Root's remarks at the founding meeting of the Association that the tertiary treatment plant was the best method of dealing with Rockwood's problems. Only two per cent of the effluent is affected by contaminants after treatment.

He assured Eden Mills residents there would be a chemical added to take phosphates out of the effluent. Hence there should be no algae problem.

Mr. Van Fleet explained there was a necessity to dump effluent into a moving stream since large bodies of water tend to accumulate behind a dam in the case of a man-made pond. The build up and creates an algae problem, which is not a health hazard but makes water unpalatable for swimmers.

Why does the system have to by-pass the conservation area? Because the park was there first and swimming rights must be protected, came the answer.

No legislation
Mr. Van Fleet admitted there was no legislation which could force conservation authorities to pay part of the bill for having the pipe by-pass them.

Is it our responsibility to ensure that the conservation authority has clean water? asked Mr. Strong. "Yes, under these circumstances," was the reply.

Mr. Letman said the costs for by-passing the conservation area with the system were offset by government grants which amounted to over half the cost of the system.

Any pollution problems on the Eramosa River are only of a minor nature now but if there was no effort made to clean up water in the village, there could be problems. Tests have shown that the river could easily absorb the two per cent sewage from the plant without ill effects.

Thanks visitors
Both Mr. Van Fleet and Mr. Letman were thanked by the meeting for their efforts to an-



FIELDING QUESTIONS from the audience at last Wednesday's meeting were engineer Gordon Van Fleet and Charles Letman, an executive officer of the O.W.R.C., on the right, next to Mr. Van Fleet. Left is Bob Leslie, a director of the Ratepayers' Association and next to him is Jack Grimason of the county health unit.—(Staff Photo)



RATEPAYERS' ASSOCIATION president Dick Strong goes over O.W.R.C. plans for a sewage treatment system in Rockwood on the board with press clippings from various papers describing the dispute in the village.—(Staff Photo)

Northern holiday
90 degree temperature surprise

John Root, M.P.P. for Wellington-Dufferin, and Mrs. Root, spent a short holiday in Northern Ontario recently, some of it in North Bay, Temagami and Cochrane, and went as far north as Moosonee and Moose Factory, with side trips over to Moonbeam, Remi Lake, and to Iroquois Falls.

During their holiday, they visited with the Hon. Rene Brunelle, Minister of Lands and Forests, at his home on Remi Lake, and also with Mr. and Mrs. Fyfe Matheson and family at Tarzwell, Ontario.

Mr. and Mrs. Root had hoped to get into a cooler climate as they went north but found the temperature up to 90 degrees at Moosonee and Moose Factory. The holiday was cut short when Mr. Root had to return to Toronto to fly to Erie, Pennsylvania, to attend a conference with representatives of Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York State. There, programs were discussed on how to combat pollution in the Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River areas of the Great Lakes system, with particular emphasis on Lake Erie.

Mr. Root was accompanied by Mr. William Steggle from the Sanitary Engineering Division of the Ontario Water Resources Commission.

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