

Sewer district lays out expansion plans

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SAGLE -- The Southside Water and Sewer District formally laid out various options Thursday for expanding its sewer system to keep pace with demand and meet future needs.

A number of design and funding options for expanding the system are on the table, though the district's board of directors still seems to favor discharging waste in the Pend Oreille River during winter and funding the project through a local improvement district.

But a current of concern over the discharge option issued from the crowd who attended the meeting at Sagle Elementary Thursday.

The discharge option has an estimated cost of \$867,000, making it one of the most cost-effective alternatives currently under consideration. However, some questioned whether the toll on water quality was a cost the district had factored.

"Is it true that the board is open to other options?" asked Owen Marcus.

District officials indicated they were, but said they are only interested in proven methods for dealing with waste.

"We're not going to run a test program here," said board Chairman Gary Wescott.

The district, which just completed a \$60,000 study to identify four alternatives, also seemed averse to spending more of patrons' money on studying additional design options.

Others, meanwhile, voiced support for one of the most expensive options already being mulled -- expanding the district's existing land application system. That option would require the purchase of 50 acres near the existing land application site and has an estimated cost of \$1.58 million.

There are even fewer options available for funding the expansion project. One way is through revenue bonds; the other is through a local improvement district.

The board favors an LID, because revenue bonds place the financial burden only on existing district customers. The LID, by contrast, would assess a per-lot charge district-wide, which spreads the cost out amongst all landowners in the district, not just ones with existing sewer hookups.

But some felt newcomers should carry most of the load, since their needs appear to have an influence on the system expansion efforts.

"If it's going to happen, I want that growth to pay its own way," said Dick Wingersen. "I have to pay more money and the only thing I get out of it is more traffic on Lakeshore Drive."

The district has made no decisions on which plan to implement or how to fund it. District officials plan to hold two more meetings to acquaint people with the issues and the proposals.

It has, however, submitted its discharge application with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in order to jump-start the regulatory oversight process.

District officials say it will take as many as two years for the EPA to process the application.