

Sewer district seeking end to moratorium

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SANDPOINT -- A proposal is in the works that would allow the Southside Water & Sewer District to remove a self-imposed building moratorium by piping sewage in excess of its land application permit to the city's wastewater treatment plant.

If an agreement can be hashed out at the city's Public Works Committee May 3, the measure will head to City Council for final approval.

Though Southside is not seeking annexation as part of the agreement, district chairman Gary Westcott said the district would acquire permits and funds to construct an underwater transmission line from its Lakeshore treatment facility to Sandpoint's plant at no expense to the city.

"The system would include two six-inch pressure lines, pumping station, metering and control systems," Westcott outlined in a letter to Mayor Ray Miller. "Sewage to be pumped would be basically untreated sewage from the district aeration lagoons."

The prospect of annexation emerged last year, as Southside sought solutions to its capacity shortfall. The district planned to discharge treated wastewater into the river, but federal regulators rejected the proposal amid objections from some residents.

Other options included purchasing more property to enhance the district's ability to apply wastewater on land or piping it across the river to Sandpoint's facilities.

But annexation appeared to have little traction with Sagle landowners, judging by a straw poll conducted by the district. In November Westcott confirmed that there was little -- if any -- support for such a move, largely because it could increase property taxes in Sagle.

In the past, Miller has reiterated that such a move -- if undertaken -- could require Southside landowners to consent to possibly being annexed in the future. He also said he would not pursue annexation unless people outside the city requested it.

Sandpoint generally declines to offer services outside of its boundaries. As a result, there has been discussion of absorbing Southside into Sandpoint's area of city impact, an area which identifies where growth outside the city could occur that would effect city services and infrastructure.

If connecting to Sandpoint's treatment plant was ultimately approved, Westcott said Southside would maintain and upgrade the underwater transmission line along with its collect, treatment and land application system at no expense to the city.

"The district would commit to fund its share of the regional sewer system through reserves, revenue bonds, and/or an LID as authorized at the time," he said.

He also believes that treatment of the district's sewage would not pose a burden or compete with normal operation of Sandpoint's wastewater plant.

"The district would utilize its storage capacity so that pumping and treatment would be accomplished at hours and times of the year when the Sandpoint facility is operating below

optimum capacity," he pointed out. "This would provide for better utilization of the Sandpoint facility as well as provide additional revenue to the city."