

Mayor's Message
Rowlesburg: July 2025

Infrastructure Problems. I noticed that PS District 1 has had problems with leaks in their water distribution system. I saw their leaks last winter on the Kingwood Pike and then more recently there as well. You might have read in The Dominion Post, also recently, about the trifecta of conditions, as one Clinton Water District official put it, causing service interruptions in its Mon County service area. The trifecta conditions were increased demand, a pump failure, and a water leak. Morgantown had a sewer line rupture, and the result was that the sewage ran into Deckers Creek for a short time. As your mayor, I tend to notice the infrastructure problems of others. Sometimes I marvel at how quickly repairs are made and then at other times I think, thank goodness, we don't have a problem like that. An example of the latter is MUB's many thousands of dollars estimate to remedy the ruptured sewer line near Deckers Creek.

My point is that all utilities, think water, wastewater, and stormwater, have, from time to time, service interruptions or problems with different levels of severity or inconvenience for customers. Rowlesburg is not immune when it comes to these utility-related infrastructure problems. Most people likely realize that, in some cases, we suffer from deferred maintenance of our stormwater system due to limited financial resources and lack of manpower. Also, parts of our water distribution system are old as is our sewer collection system and stress, from any unexpected source, frequently results in failure somewhere in the system.

I will add that citizens can do their part to lessen the need for maintenance of our stormwater system. This means don't blow grass into the street, keep it in the yard and in the spring clean the grit and cinders which accumulate on sidewalks in front of your property after winter storms. The only thing that should go into the storm drain basins is stormwater

Last month I reported on the water line leak on South Buffalo Street. To prevent a massive interruption of water service, that leak was quickly repaired by Darel Moats and crew and thanks to help from Bill Mayne and Ralph Thomas. The year's long leak further South on Buffalo Street is still waiting for manpower resources to be available to repair the leak; hence, a prime example of deferred maintenance. An unusually high intensity rainfall with significant duration last week brought to light another example of deferred maintenance when our stormwater collection system was incapable of handling the increased flows on Buffalo Street and High Street in Manheim. There are other locations where repairs are needed to our utility's infrastructure. One of the big ones is a clogging problem in one of the sewer manholes along the river. Because of high water, Darel Moats has not had a chance to assess this problem to date.

My discussion of existing deferred maintenance in the Town's utility infrastructure components is in **no way** a complaint aimed at our Town workers. They do a great job with the resources we have available. So, why does the Town's infrastructure suffer from deferred maintenance? I believe that the Town's deferred maintenance situation stems from a couple of conditions which have changed over time.

One is the infrastructure system was designed back in the day when the Town's population was likely 3 times larger than it is today. As I mentioned above, many parts of our utility infrastructure are old and on top of that with a diminished population base, the revenue base to support it is also diminished. Consequently, an old system designed to serve a larger population, but with revenue coming from a smaller population, means that priorities must be identified and some maintenance needs get deferred. A second condition contributing to deferred maintenance is the state and federal regulatory requirements which must be met by the Town's utility infrastructure systems. In recent years these regulations have steadily increased. In fact, a new requirement to sample and test for a group of chemicals known as PFAS came out this year. Google PFAS to learn about it. It is not that these regulations are bad, they are designed to protect our health and safety. However, these regulations do take manpower and resources which in earlier days would have been directed to maintenance.

Town Attorney. The Town Council voted to employ an attorney to help with enforcing the Property Maintenance Ordinance #38, that is the cleanup of debris-cluttered yards and yards with junked or unlicensed cars or illegal camping trailers or vehicles. Legal services for other needs will also be addressed.

Council meetings are on the second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Please attend and let us know what's on your mind.

It's a pleasure to serve you.

Darrell

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