

Infrastructure

Voice and Data Transmission Infrastructure

Based upon interviews with CenturyTel and Charter Communications, both companies have recently upgraded service and volume capacity in and around Chesaning. Further, with the exception of the most remote parts of the Township, it appears that Chesaning is provided with comparable service and price levels with most other areas of the County and State. No obvious gaps in service or capacity were noted. Finally, both companies stated that the voice and data transmission infrastructure could easily accommodate a significant amount of new development.

Water & Sewer Systems

Clearly the biggest obstacle to any significant growth (manufacturing, commercial or residential) in Chesaning is the municipal water and sewer systems. **The configuration, capacity, and condition of this infrastructure effectively blocks growth in the Chesaning region.**

These public utilities are one critical component to attracting new investment to Chesaning. Simply put, the private sector will not wait for infrastructure to be financed and constructed. The reasons for this reality basically have to do with time and uncertainty. Investors, developers, and businesses are risk averse and avoid unclear timeframes and uncertainty.

While there is great concern about the recent challenges the Village has faced with the MDEQ, the greater problem facing Chesaning is developing a long-term plan to wisely invest in both the water and sewer systems.

The following are five key public infrastructure challenges the community faces:

- **Water system design.** In areas the community has identified for growth, water mains are either not present or undersized and not “looped” (connected to nearby water mains). For example, the former Hancor plant on Peet Road has no water service and the closest water line is a dead end 4” water main over 1,200’ from the site. This is in an area targeted for new manufacturing and the new home of the Saginaw County Fair.
- **Water system pressure.** While the areas immediately surrounding the only water tower in the center of the Village enjoy good pressure and volume, areas around the perimeter of the Village (areas targeted for growth) generally lack pressure and volume. Nearly all commercial and manufacturing buildings require fire suppression systems because of both building codes and insurance requirements. This kind of water pressure and volume is not available in most parts of the Village.
- **Storm water infill and infiltration (I&I).** Storm water finding its way into the sanitary sewer system is a problem because it creates potentially huge volumes of influent during rains in need of treatment by the sewer plant. Problems with I&I are often a symptom of older sewer systems and place a burden on all customers of the sewer system. Parts of this system are nearly 50 years old and near the end of their design life.
- **Sanitary sewer line size and depth of lines.** Existing sanitary sewer lines generally cannot be extended to serve new development because the lines are relatively shallow and not sized for additional capacity. Practically speaking, no one single development will likely consider bearing the cost of lift stations and force mains necessary to provide service outside of the existing system. This reality effectively blocks development around the perimeter of the Village.

- **Lack of public utilities extending along on M-57 to intersection with M-52.** The intersection M-52 and M-57 is the only intersection of two highways in the community. The amount of development this area has attracted despite the lack of utilities is a testimony to the powerful attraction of a highway intersection. However, additional development in this area will be limited without sanitary sewer and water. Furthermore, in the future the community may possibly face a risk to public health if development continues in this area with out public utilities.

Solution

In order to attract new development, the community clearly needs to invest in both the water and sewer systems. The following are specific recommendations for your consideration:

- **Request a rate study of the sanitary sewer system.** A rate study will give Village decision makers the information basis they need to review and modify the current funding structure of the sanitary sewer system.
- **Establish a significant sanitary sewer maintenance or “rainy day” fund.** One important component of the rate study will be the availability of unrestricted “cash on hand” for maintenance emergencies. The Village is at significant risk for such emergencies given the age of the sanitary sewer system. Currently, the sanitary sewer fund has practically no ready cash. We recommend consulting with your engineers and accountants, but a minimal amount to target is 10-25% of sewer fund budget or an additional \$40-100,000. With a dedicated funding source for maintenance of the existing system, the 1½ mills the Village levies for sanitary system improvements can then be focused on expanding the system to unserved residents and areas for potential development.
- **Establish a water system “loop” fund.** While the water system appears to be financially healthy, the level of service provided by the water system needs to be improved. Specifically, water mains need to be looped and the size of many mains

needs to be increased. A second water tower for system redundancy and emergencies should also be considered. With a dedicated funding source for improvements to the existing system, the one mill the Village levies for water system improvements can be focused on expanding the system to unserved areas. We recommend consulting with your engineer, but an annual amount to raise for these improvements is approximately \$50-75,000 per year.

- **Consider bonding for improvements.** In order to expeditiously make significant improvements to both systems, the Village should consider consulting with their engineer and accountant about the potential of bonding for some of these system improvements.