

VILLAGE OF EPHRAIM

FOUNDED 1853



Wastewater Committee Minutes Monday, May 11, 2026, 9:00 AM

Present: Karen McMurtry- Chair, Rick Hoyerman, Bruce Nelson, Jim Peterman

Absent: Dennis Jewell

Staff: Brad Rasmusson – Wastewater Manager/Operator in Charge, Kim Roberts – Deputy Clerk/Utility Clerk, Brent Bristol-Administrator

Online: Andrea Collak – Clerk/Treasurer, Daniel Oakley – Wastewater Operator

1. **Call to order:** The meeting was called to order by Chair - McMurtry and a quorum was present for this meeting.
2. **Changes in Agenda:** None
3. **Previous minutes – Minutes from April 6, 2026**

Peterman moved, McMurtry seconded to approve April 6, 2026, meeting minutes as presented, all ayes, and the motion carried.

4. **Visitors' comments:** None

5. **Ephraim Plant Manager Report:**

Rasmusson reviewed the WW, WWT, and SS OIC reports as included in the agenda packet. Wastewater duties were completed according to schedule.

Rasmusson noted that the Wastewater Department installed UV system and started up without any issues.

They set up trash pump at lift 1 in preparation for possible backups due to high flows during rain and snow melting. Fortunately, they never used it. We did have 345,000 gallons flow through the plant within a 24-hour period.

They spent several days looking for sources of infiltration. Great Lakes TV & Seal came on-site for two days with their camera truck. 5 leaking manholes were found, 4 have been repaired already, 1 sump pump connected to the sewer which has been shut off, and about 6 cracked or broken laterals. Rasmusson has been in contact with most of them and repairs are in the process.

The sewer flushing was completed. They will be scheduling the lift stations cleaning.

They sent out all the required effluent samples for our discharge permit renewal and will hopefully finish the renewal process soon.

Also, annual sludge characteristics test along with PFAS test required by Sturgeon Bay for their permit renewal.

Ephraim Well Water Testing: Year to Date

Number of Water Tests: 147 304

In-House Bacteria: 107 262

Clean Water Testing: 40 42

Ephraim Septage Service: Year to Date

Holding Tank Pump Outs: 4 9

Septic Pump Outs/Inspections:

Emergency Call Ins:

6. Discussion regarding residential REU rate structure

McMurtry introduced this agenda item by acknowledging the extensive work that had been put into the analysis and invited Deputy Clerk Kim Roberts to present the proposed residential REU rate structure framework to the committee.

Deputy Clerk Roberts opened by framing the discussion as a starting point for conversation, emphasizing that the committee was not yet talking about rates — only about the methodology for assigning Residential Equivalency Units (REUs). She explained that the current system assigns flat 1 REU to all residential properties in the Village, based on an assumed 300 gallons per day, regardless of home size. After months of research and analysis, she concluded that this approach no longer reflects equitable service access across the Village's varying residential properties.

Roberts presented the proposed methodology, which is grounded in Wisconsin Standardized Plumbing Code SPS 383 — the same code used to design on-site wastewater systems. Under this standard, flow is calculated at 150 gallons per day per bedroom, based on the assumption of two occupants per bedroom, each averaging 50 gallons per day, with a 1.5 safety factor applied. Using this methodology, the existing 300 gallons per day baseline was determined to be appropriate only for 1- to 2-bedroom homes — meaning the current flat-rate assignment has likely been under-assigning REUs for larger properties for years.

Roberts described the extensive database that had been constructed to support this work, drawing on the municipal assessor's records, property files, real estate listings, short-term rental license applications, and plan committee records — including, in some cases, building plans reviewed to confirm bedroom counts. She noted with some humor that the resulting binder was "too heavy" to bring to the meeting.

Proposed Rate Structure

The proposed framework assigns REUs on a sliding scale, increasing by one-half REU with each additional bedroom beyond the first two:

- 1–2 bedrooms (or studio): 1.0 REU / 300 gallons per day
- 3 bedrooms: 1.5 REUs / 450 gallons per day
- 4 bedrooms: 2.0 REUs / 600 gallons per day
- And so on, with each additional bedroom adding 0.5 REU

Roberts presented sample comparisons using Water Street properties, illustrating current versus proposed REU assignments alongside current and projected quarterly and annual billing at the existing rate of \$150 per REU, along with the resulting percentage change.

Multiple Structures and Condo Associations

Roberts addressed how properties with multiple structures would be handled: each structure on a parcel would receive its own REU assignment based on its bedroom count, and those would be totaled for the parcel. She illustrated an example where one structure had three bedrooms (1.5

REUs) and a second had two bedrooms (1.0 REU), yielding a combined parcel assignment of 2.5 REUs.

She also presented an example of a condominium association that had historically been assigned a blended REU figure of 6.46 REUs, whereas under the proposed framework, each individual unit within the association would be assigned its own REU based on bedroom count. Roberts noted that in the past, similar properties had been handled inconsistently, and the new framework would create uniformity across the board.

The discussion that followed was substantive and largely supportive of the proposed approach.

Peterman expressed strong enthusiasm, noting that a well-classified, data-driven system eliminates the need for subjective annual catch-up and ensures that every property owner pays a fair share. He acknowledged the real-world complexity of the issue, sharing that he had even fielded inquiries from property owners wishing to run sewer lines to garages with upstairs bedrooms — a scenario that carries significant compliance implications. He stressed that with a defensible, standardized system in place, the committee need not apologize for rate changes: "If we're behind on our schedule, then this is what you have to pay."

Hoyerman thanked Roberts for the work, characterizing it as "way above and beyond," and then raised a series of clarifying questions. Hoyerman asked how zero-bedroom structures (e.g., sheds or garages connected to sewer) would be handled; Roberts confirmed that the defining factor is whether the structure is connected to the sewer system — if connected, it receives at minimum a 1 REU assignment. Hoyerman then asked how bedroom counts would be determined and verified. Roberts explained that the assessor assigns bedroom counts during property valuation, often estimating from exterior square footage, but that her research process had involved a back-and-forth exchange with the assessor, in many cases updating his records based on STR license applications, personal property files, and real estate listings. Hoyerman acknowledged that disputes from homeowners who disagree with their bedroom count would ultimately be a matter for the homeowner to resolve with the assessor. He concluded by asking whether Roberts had encountered any rate structures in her research that used a declining marginal increment — where, for example, the value assigned per additional bedroom decreases at higher counts. Roberts indicated she had not seen any such models; she emphasized that the goal is to ensure sufficient revenue to meet the financial demands of the treatment facility, and that flat incremental increases are the prevailing approach.

Nelson raised the question of seasonality, noting that many homes in Ephraim are seasonal-use properties. McMurtry confirmed that the village's ordinance already addresses this and that seasonal-use objections had previously been raised and addressed — the connection to the system is the determining factor, not frequency of use. Nelson also asked where the 150 gallons per day per bedroom figure originated. Roberts confirmed it derives from Wisconsin Standardized Plumbing Code SPS 383, describing it as a "very good methodology" because it is the same standard used for designing the systems that generate the discharge. Nelson confirmed that this made the standard "defendable."

Rasmusson confirmed that he had been using Roberts' research to investigate specific properties — she had provided him with a list of structures that might be connected but were not currently on the billing rolls. He noted that two such properties had already been identified. Roberts acknowledged there remain additional properties where it is still unclear whether secondary

structures are actively connected to the sewer, and that this would need to be resolved before finalizing assignments.

Peterman raised a philosophical question about whether the proposed assignment accurately captures actual usage — noting, for example, that an older couple in a 4-bedroom home is likely to discharge far less than a full occupancy. Roberts addressed this directly and without hesitation: the property could be sold, and the new owners might use it as a rental or bed-and-breakfast. The REU assignment follows the property, not the occupants. Roberts summarized: "It's factual. How many bedrooms do you have? How many connections do you have? And it doesn't change how you're using the properties." This approach was well received by the committee members as being both transparent and easy for residents to understand.

Nelson observed that under this framework, the number of addresses or structures on a parcel becomes irrelevant — only the total bedroom count across all connected structures matters. Roberts confirmed this, noting that it significantly simplifies administration.

McMurtry asked what the committee needed to formally do at this meeting. Roberts indicated that a formal motion was not necessary — a consensus to continue down this path would be sufficient. Once the full residential analysis is complete and commercial REU assignments are developed, the full package will be returned to the committee, at which point rates could be evaluated with the auditor.

Roberts indicated she was approximately 65–70% complete with the commercial REU analysis. McMurtry explained that she had intentionally withheld asking Roberts to invest further time in commercial analysis until the committee had reviewed and accepted the residential framework — to avoid compounding her effort if the approach were to be rejected.

Hoyerman suggested that when the matter eventually comes forward for formal action, the committee should present residential and commercial together as a single recommendation to the Village Board, rather than in pieces. He acknowledged his preference was partly practical — as a Board member, he would rather receive it all at once.

Regarding the commercial methodology, Bristol noted that the bedroom-based methodology would naturally carry over to lodging-type commercial properties such as hotels and motels, but that restaurants, retail, and other uses would require a different approach. The use of established metrics — rather than village-created formulas — was highlighted as a strength. The comment was made that while a metric can be challenged, using a code-based standard is "totally defensible." The committee consensus was to continue developing the commercial analysis.

The Chair, McMurtry and committee members thanked Roberts warmly for her work, with one member describing the effort as "a project" requiring "a lot of time."

7. Visitors' comments: None

8. New business for the next meeting:

McMurtry raised the pending engineering questions submitted to McMahon Engineering. Rasmusson noted he had not yet received responses

Bristol added that the inquiry he sent to McMahon centered on clarifying the current state of the wastewater improvement project phasing, specifically with respect to the solar component: what work had already been paid for, what remains, and whether solar could move forward as a

standalone submission for Clean Water Fund financing independent of any larger project bundle. Bristol noted that as of the meeting, no final decision had been made on whether to bundle all improvements for a 2027 application or to resubmit the solar component as a standalone Phase 1 for 2027. He expressed some frustration that clarity had been elusive, noting there had previously been "some confusion with dates" related to the solar timeline.

Key open questions communicated to the engineer included: whether solar engineering was sufficiently complete to go to bid; what costs remain; what the lead times are for various components; and what specific work had already been paid for versus what would need additional expenditure. Bristol noted that the 2027 Clean Water Fund application deadline falls in September, making timelines important to nail down. He acknowledged that the engineer had not yet responded but had apparently been asked "some decent questions."

Rasmusson indicated he would also follow up on permit applications concurrently.

The next meeting was set for **June 1, 2026**.

9. Adjournment

McMurtry moved, Hoyerman seconded to adjourn the meeting, all ayes, and the motion carried.
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Recorded by Andrea Collak - Clerk/Treasurer