

I'm the Monte Rio/Villa Grande representative to our Municipal Advisory Council (MAC) and in that capacity I have attended meetings of our Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) for several years. I want to share with you some of my thoughts regarding the wastewater treatment questions before us.

I need to be very clear -- I am NOT speaking for the MAC. NOR am I speaking for the CAG. I am speaking only for myself. Other people in those groups undoubtedly have different thoughts. I simply felt that as someone you have elected you deserve to know my thoughts on this.

At the meeting on the 29th you'll be given a lot of information including the number of developed lots in our 2 communities and the number of undeveloped lots. Also, the number of developed lots which have inadequate septic systems. This doesn't mean currently failing systems. Generally it means lots that are either too small to have adequate room for the leach field of a conventional septic system or too close to the river to have adequate separation between their leach lines and the water table. That's what we're being asked to fix.

There are several ways to address these problems so the real meat of the meeting will be the feedback we give. Questions/comments/opinions we may have about either of the 2 possibilities that will be presented or the decision-making process itself. There are essentially two types of community wastewater systems. Conventional systems employ deep large diameter collection pipes and large municipal treatment plants that may dispose of treated effluent either to streams or land. Alternative systems employ small diameter pipes to convey septic tank effluent to smaller closed treatment systems distributed strategically throughout the community. Their treated effluent is dispersed to soil absorption fields.

There are significant differences in costs and environmental effects, depending on the setting in which they are employed. Disposal to the River is not a feasible option for Monte Rio so our sewage must be pumped at great cost to Guerneville, Graton or wherever for treatment and disposal. Alternative systems might be feasible with treated effluent to be dispersed where suitable soil conditions exist. Such alternative systems have been permitted by the Regional Board and Sonoma County for institutions, commercial establishments and small communities.

This is a feasibility study to determine what's affordable, practical and cost-effective. There are no engineering construction plans at this point. There won't be answers about which of our homes is immediately affected. The ultimate point of this meeting is for us to give the engineers some direction. This information is preliminary. What direction do we want them to pursue? What questions should they delve into more thoroughly?

I'll be sharing with you some of my questions. If any of them are important to you let them know at the meeting. Numbers are important here. If only 1 person cares about a question it probably won't get much further study. Just speak up and say you agree with the person who said (whatever).

During the pandemic I was made aware of what are terms "liquid-only sewers." Since it was the pandemic I had more time than usual to look into these. I believe they have a number of advantages over conventional gravity-fed sewers.

I'll start with the construction costs and considerations and operating and maintenance costs (O&M). These systems are very efficient in separating liquid and solid waste. The solids are left in the septic tank and are pumped periodically just like we're used to. The liquids either flow by gravity or are pumped through small diameter PVC pipes to where they will be treated and dispersed.

Whether you're using a 6"-8" pipe for a conventional gravity sewer or a 2" pipe for a liquid-only sewer the process of putting the pipes in the ground is essentially the same: tear off the pavement, dig a trench, lay the pipe, re-fill the trench then re-pave over it. However, there are huge differences depending on the size of the pipe. Large pipes go down the roadway while smaller pipes can go along the side of the road. The trenches for the larger pipe are both deeper and wider -- twice as wide as the smaller. This is obviously more costly to lay and tears up more asphalt in the process. All pipelines are very expensive but the ones with bigger pipes for conventional gravity sewers cost considerably more. All of these road issues are particularly impactful to those of us who live on our hills with our extremely steep, crumbling, narrow one-lane roads. Much of Villa Grande has extremely narrow roads as well.

Comment: Both alternatives presented have similar lengths of pipeline. I want the engineers to look closely at the costs for each size of pipe as well as other ramifications...length of time that roads will be completely closed for construction, (especially important during fire season for people like me whose entire hill is serviced by one dead-end road). Also consider damage to trees both during construction and shortly

thereafter due to root damage. (Going back in to remove dead trees was a large unexpected expense for the people of Guerneville during their sewer installation).

Question: Have you identified areas of our Monte Rio community that are especially costly and difficult to serve with conventional gravity sewers and have you evaluated the feasibility of serving those areas with alternative collection and treatment?

How is the conventional sewage alternative with its cost of the pipeline and pump stations to (Guerneville, Graton, or _____) less costly than the alternative system that does not require such a pipeline and has lower operational costs?

Costs for building a system are obviously important, but costs for running it are too. The company that I looked into that manufactures parts for and installs liquid-only sewers is Orenco. I'm sure there are others. I was told by several people in the business that Orenco systems are very reliable, costly to buy initially but very inexpensive to operate. Each household in Guerneville pays close to \$200/month to flush their toilets. (In a lump sum on their property tax bill). Each unit (trailer) at River Bend Campground which a group of us recently toured pays \$2/month. That's a huge difference!

Feedback: I want info on the life-time costs of operating each alternative, not just initial costs.

I've often been told that major infrastructure projects are growth inducing.

Comment: I want information on this project vis-à-vis development. What are the legalities surrounding this? Do either of the projects presented have the ability to limit development?

Further questions: Will the public have another opportunity to give meaningful input about this project? Is there a timeline for questions and comments to be accepted? Will we have the opportunity to vote on which alternative we prefer?

These are some of my thoughts. I hope it's helpful to some of you, and I hope I will see you at the Monte Rio Community Center on the 29th (10:00-12:00).

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