

Sewers, a Key Ingredient of a Successful Master Plan Where, Why and Who Pays

Cross over the bridge, I-81 Bridge that is at New York Route 49 and what do we see? Well I guess it all depends upon which way you are traveling, if you are heading west the first thing you see is a couple very busy fast food restaurants, the Golden Arches and across the way home to the big burger. Go a bit further and you see a super Wal-Mart, a busy convenience store, bowling ally, a couple busy banks, drug store, liquor store, health center and the list goes on. If you take a fast right off I-81 at exit 32 you encounter a couple convenience stores that sell fuel, a restaurant, a beauty shop, propane dealer and an auto repair shop and oh yes an off track betting parlor. Is there a tremendous difference in the tax base from one side of the bridge to the other, and are there differences in the tremendous amount of services offered? You bet there is. Sure we West Monroe residents can cross the bridge and benefit from these businesses with little trouble but who is reaping the benefits because of their location? How many of you reading this knows that I-81 is the boundary line between the Town of West Monroe and the Town of Hastings? One major difference from one side of this bridge to the other is to the west in the Town of Hastings there are municipal sewers and water, to the east of the bridge in West Monroe there is water but no sewers. Life offers no guarantees and would sewers east of I-81 into our town be the silver bullet, who knows; but the fact remains the commercial businesses in the Town of Hastings within eye sight of West Monroe are light years ahead of us in terms of tax base and services says a lot. Would Wal-Mart be where they are without sewers, of course not?

The West Monroe Master Plan Committee learned early on from our hired professional planner James Kent that residential only cannot sustain the services required by the community; that is a national accepted fact concerning real property and community planning. Of the more than 50 plus items the committee listed as desirable for the town plan four critical items jump out as key and foremost for success; zoning, infrastructure, hamlet and Oneida Lake access. Concerning infrastructure the committee deliberated long and hard that in order to attract big box commercial to our town, sewers were a must; the logical location for a sewer district to accomplish that goal was the New York Route 49 corridor starting from the town line at I-81 and extending eastward to approximately County Route 11. Discussion also entered into the possibility of extending the sewer district a bit north and south on County Route 37 at the Route 49 intersection. The final decision concerning the overall scope of the sewer project will be finalized by the town board and the landowners involved along the proposed route through public meetings and public hearings.

One item should be very clear to all West Monroe residents concerning cost and who pays. Although all residents will ultimately benefit by having commercial businesses establish throughout the corridor in reduced traveling to obtain services and goods, and increased tax base for the town it will be the landowners along the sewer route that will bear the cost burden. In this regard the town will make every effort to obtain state and federal grant funds to ease the burden.

As a very long time resident of West Monroe we have come to expect to drive great distances to places as the Carousal Mall or Great Northern Mall for many of our needs but it really does not have to be that way. First every purchase we make at these outlining places only adds to the sales tax collected by our southern neighbor, Onondaga County, it is our loss and

secondly the north shore of Oneida Lake does have the population to support commercial big box growth. Even with sewers growth probably will not happen much in the next five years or more but with a sewer district we have a better than even chance of attracting new businesses and an ever increasing tax base.

As always our goal is to keep you the West Monroe residents informed; my next column will hopefully give you a much better understanding of our "commercial land use" within the town; where is it and what is it. And as always we urge residents to attend our meetings; the complete schedule is listed on our web site at www.townofwestmonroe-ny.us.