SDWD Board Meeting 3/12/26

Quick recap

The Somerset Domestic Water Works District board meeting focused on addressing water quality issues and treatment facility upgrades. The board discussed recommendations from engineers Brad and Kirk regarding groundwater contamination problems, including high total dissolved solids and calcium hardness. After reviewing options for treatment systems like reverse osmosis or ion exchange, the board unanimously approved moving forward with a feasibility study to evaluate costs and technical requirements. The study will include discussions with state regulators about discharge requirements for the proposed treatment waste. Stephanie Parker will assist with preparing the OJT grant application to fund the feasibility study, which can include other needed improvements like raw water intake system upgrades. The board also noted the need for a member meeting in early June and discussed outstanding billing issues that Stephanie will help address.

Summary

Somerset Water District Board Appointments

The Somerset Domestic Water Works District meeting on March 12th, 2026, appointed two new board members, Ken Sickler and John Mlakar. The board approved the meeting minutes from March 9th, 2026.

Water System Engineering Recommendations

The meeting focused on water system issues and engineering recommendations. Kirk reported a water leak incident that was resolved by Monday, and discussed ongoing operations including the river pump running 24/7 while waiting for Browns Hill programming. Brad, an engineer from SGM, joined to present recommendations from a recent site visit, suggesting that Somerset should invest in treatment facility upgrades rather than the proposed Oxbow tank, as the current treatment facility is mismatched with both groundwater and river sources. The board previously agreed to postpone the Oxbow tank project, and Brad's team recommended addressing the core problems of variable calcium hardness and total dissolved solids in the groundwater source.

Water Filtration System Upgrade Discussion

Brad explained that advanced filtration or ion exchange systems are needed to remove calcium hardness and bromide contaminants, which are causing scaling and disinfection byproduct issues. He clarified that these systems would be installed at the treatment facility after the current filters but before the existing treatment processes, and would likely use a split-stream approach to treat only a portion of the water. Brad also noted that while additional chemicals might not be needed, a sequestering agent for corrosion protection would likely still be required, possibly at a reduced dose.

Treatment Options Evaluation Discussion

Brad explained that neither reverse osmosis nor ion exchange treatment would require additional chemical addition downstream, but both would generate challenging waste streams that need disposal. He noted uncertainties around operational costs for both treatment options, including membrane replacement, chemical cleaning, energy costs, and waste disposal. Brad recommended further evaluation, particularly regarding state regulations on discharge into the existing pond, as a first step before proceeding with either treatment option.

Groundwater Quality Issues Discussion

The group discussed water quality issues, particularly high calcium and TDS levels in groundwater, which Kirk identified as a widespread problem in the area. Brad noted that while the limited data suggests the issue is likely due to the area's hydrology rather than contamination from the infiltration pond, further water quality sampling and characterization are needed to confirm this. Kirk mentioned plans to conduct additional testing, including copper tests, and discussed concerns about the potential corrosiveness of water treated by reverse osmosis. The group also touched on the need for state approval of a discharge pond and the possibility of redesignating it as a non-discharge pond.

Water Quality Feasibility Planning

The board discussed the next steps for addressing water quality issues, with Brad recommending a feasibility analysis and characterization of water quality to determine the most appropriate and cost-effective treatment options. Stephanie confirmed that the OJT grant allows for a feasibility study, and they plan to include this in the grant application along with other necessary upgrades. The group agreed to move forward with the grant process, with Brad taking the lead on communicating with the state about discharge requirements. They also discussed the possibility of additional grant funding available on July 1st to cover engineering costs.

Groundwater Treatment Feasibility Study

The group discussed a feasibility study for groundwater treatment and system improvements, with Brad proposing to develop a scope of work and cost estimate before grant submission. The board approved moving forward with the feasibility study and state compliance work, with Stephanie agreeing to handle the grant application.