

# Friends of Park County

P.O. Box 23, Pray, Montana 59065

*Promoting thoughtfully planned growth in order to protect and enhance Park County's vibrant communities, sustainable working lands, and healthy natural resources.*

## Recommendations and Supporting Testimony to the Livingston Planning Board on Draft Growth Policy Chapter 9 “Public Facilities”

March 16, 2021

### **Recommendation: Adopt an objective affirming the coordination of public facilities as an important means for achieving the overall compact growth strategy.**

The type, timing and scale of the construction of new public facilities and the commitment to the maintenance of existing facilities (roads, sewers, water supplies, parks, schools, stormwater treatment, etc.) is one of the most powerful means of achieving a compact growth pattern and curbing sprawl. The draft of Chapter 9 is silent on this topic.

Friends of Park County recommends the adoption of a new Goal 9.1 and related objectives to assure the provision and maintenance of public facilities helps execute the overall compact growth strategy:

NEW Goal 9.1. Maintain existing public facilities and provide new public facilities of the type, in the locations, financed and timed in ways that realize the overall growth policy for compact, contiguous growth and redevelopment.

NEW Objective 9.1.1. Use the timing and provision of new public facilities to promote infill and redevelopment and phase contiguous new Smart Growth development to achieve a traditional pattern of city growth that maintains the vitality of the downtown and existing neighborhoods.

NEW Strategy 9.1.1.1 Create infrastructure maintenance and improvement phasing plan based on an analysis of the city's and its taxpayers' fiscal capacity to pay for maintenance, operations, renovations and new public facilities, that is integrated with other compact growth policies and implementation steps including updating of city's zoning.

### **Recommendation: Reconcile the 1.0% to 2.0% annual growth rate range used in Chapter 2 with the 2.6% annual growth rate used as the basis for a \$16.8 Million in proposed wastewater upgrades in Chapter 9.**

The population range projection in Chapter 2 of the Growth Policy should be used to guide the implementation of the Growth Policy through the city's public facilities and services planning.

The Planning Board has reviewed and approved using a range of potential growth rates in Chapter 2, a range of between 1.0% and 2.0% per year in Table 2.1.

But on page 81 of the draft of Chapter 9, a population growth rate of 2.6% per year was used for determining whether and what kinds of improvements might be needed to the city's wastewater collection system (proposed editing of the text in the March 11 staff memo is incorporated):

*Although the City of Livingston and Park County have experienced minimal population growth in recent years, the neighboring Gallatin County has seen a drastic population boom. The increase in residents in the City of Bozeman is likely to occur similarly within the City of Livingston. The sewer collection preliminary engineering report anticipates ~~As such, the City has approved~~ an annual growth rate of 2.6 percent to use as a planning figure for increase in sanitary flows, resulting in a design average day flow of 1.44 MGD in 2040. This will nearly double the sanitary flows, not associated with I/I, over the next 20 years. Furthermore, the City is expecting large commercial growth along West Park Street. The anticipated increased flows are expected to exceed the design capacity of the Centennial lift station. Worst case growth rates are used to ensure sewer capacity for the residents of the community. Conservative growth estimates for sanitary flow could lead to catastrophic failure of the sewer collection system.*

Based on the 2.6% annual growth rate, the September 2019 "Preliminary Engineering Report: Wastewater Collection System" by TD & H Engineering recommended \$16.8 million in improvements to the wastewater collection system.

That report discusses possible funding sources, including sources supplementing local taxes but an actual funding package is not proposed, a matter left for the city.

Friends of Park County strongly supports protecting the Yellowstone River and other streams and groundwater from contamination by human sewage. Protecting water quality can require improvements to the wastewater collection system.

But the timing and scale of those improvements, and their cost to taxpayers, depends on whether those improvements are made consistently with the designated growth areas and staged for the time when they are needed in the face of population growth.

The Planning Board needs to address whether and how to address the use of differing growth forecasts in the Growth Policy. Here are some options for achieving consistency:

- Revise the maximum forecasted growth rate in Chapter 2 from 2.0 to 2.6% to be consistent with Chapter 9 and its commitment to investing \$16.8 million in wastewater improvements.
- Reconsider the schedule for the \$16.8 million investment in wastewater improvements, using the 2.0% growth forecast.

- Note the inconsistency but defer firm commitments regarding investments in the wastewater system to determine whether to adjust the growth forecast range as part of an implementation step.

**Recommendation: Adopt an objective and strategies for wastewater system improvements.**

Chapter 9 includes objectives addressing several categories of current and potential infrastructure including stormwater treatment, internet broadband services, parks and recreation and arts facilities. However there is no objective and no strategy related to wastewater collection and treatment even though major public investments are discussed in the chapter.