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Keep the Environmental Commission

There is a public hearing this Monday (Sept. 23) at 6 p.m. at the Lewiston Town Hall to discuss the recent Town Board's decision to eliminate the standing Environmental Commission.

As a former member of the commission, I always felt that its mission was important in maintaining environmental guardrails and providing environmental accountability reviews, including adherence to important SEQR laws and the town's ongoing struggle with its expanding "waste" line.

Just last week, a huge semi-truck overturned and made an unscheduled delivery of tons of garbage on the Town Hall's front yard, closing the intersection and causing a huge hazmat cleanup that lasted most of the day. There are residents in the Morgan Farms subdivision that live in fear of the next rain event with ongoing flooding of their basements from an overtaxed sanitary sewer system. After 75 years of babysitting atomic waste from the Manhattan Project of World War II, it's finally starting to be cleaned up and moved in the right direction out of our

community. The endless convoys of hazardous waste trucks co-mingled with school buses on Creek Road have long ceased to terrorize our roads. These are only a few of the environmental concerns that have plagued Lewiston over the years and negatively impacted our quality of life.

Eliminating one of the safeguards and hurdles that developers and the waste industry have to negotiate needs to be reconsidered. I feel that the message this action will send to the waste industry will be in the form of an invitation.

Timothy Henderson

Families still seeking answers about flooding

Last week's Tribune/Sentinel published an article about a recent Lewiston Town Council work session that discussed the ongoing sewage problems.

Unfortunately, the fundamental and core issues were never addressed. Namely, why are local residents experiencing sewer backups in their basements? This issue has been at the forefront for months, and yet, we have never received an answer.

On Aug. 7, we sent letters to Supervisor Steve Broderick, along with Town Council members John Jacoby, Rob Morreale, Jason Myers and Sarah Waechter. We asked three simple questions in our ongoing efforts to learn more about the town's sewer system backups along with possible solutions. We also asked that they get back to us in writing within three weeks so we could compile their answers.

Strangely, we have not received a single response from anyone on the Lewiston Town Council. At this point, we are absolutely baffled. Is there a Town Board conspiracy of silence? Is it because they don't know enough about the issue to comment? Are they afraid of the expense it will cost the town to fix the problem? Are they hoping the issue just goes away and we'll move on? (That's not going to happen!)

The straight forward questions we asked were: 1) Do you believe the Town of Lewiston has an infiltration

problem? (In other words, do you believe storm and ground water are getting into the sewer lines?)

2) Do you believe the infiltration is creating pressure in the sewer lines that is causing sewage to back up in residents' basements? If not, what do you believe is causing the sewer backups in residents' basements?

3) To your knowledge, does the town have a plan (on the shelf or in development) to solve the infiltration problem? If so, can you provide some details on what the town plans to do?

We feel those were fair and relevant questions in light of the sewer backup problems experienced by dozens of local residents. As of today, we give our council members a failing grade for responsiveness. We prayed that one or more of our representatives would become a champion of our cause and defend us, but as of now, it looks as if they are washing their hands of the sewer issue (pun intended!)

We've attempted to engage discussion with the board at the Town Board meetings. They listen to our questions, but sit there with blank faces and stare at us like deer in headlights.

One thing that has been made abundantly clear from Broderick and Sewer Plant Director Ritter is that they believe that installing back flow preventers is a solution. We've addressed this before and want to emphasize that we wouldn't

need back flow preventers if there weren't sewer backups in the first place. Moreover, back flow preventers stop the flow of sewage in both directions, so we wouldn't be able to use our sinks, toilets, showers or dishwashers for 24-48 hours after a big rain event.

So, are we any further ahead getting answers - or the truth - than we were months ago? Unfortunately, not. We do see online that the town has contracted for an engineering study on the sewer infiltration problem, which is to be completed by Dec. 14. We look forward to seeing that report.

In the meantime, will someone associated with the town - anyone - please explain to us why we are experiencing sewer backups during prolonged rain events? Can someone explain what is being done to prevent millions of gallons of storm water from getting into our sewer system that creates so much pressure that the system is pushing sewage into our basements and homes, threatening our health and causing thousands of dollars in damage?

Beyond that, can the town assure us that all of the storm water culverts running to the river have been cleared and have the capacity to handle major rain events? Does the town possess any information or records that would indicate that the storm water system in the Morgan Farms area was improperly installed years ago and not in compliance

with the original engineering specs? (It's important to remember that we believe the major source of storm water infiltration is not coming from Morgan Farms, but from the Village of Lewiston and points south of Morgan Drive.)

In past letters, we've tried to help and have offered common-sense solutions that we believe will help mitigate the situation without local taxpayer expense. Those ideas have fallen on deaf ears.

We all know the Town Council members go out of their way and ask for our votes, promising us that they will do their best to represent and defend the people of the Town of Lewiston. While past Town Councils have kicked the can down the road, this Town Council has an opportunity to do something about it. Yes, we know this is a huge problem and we can only hope they are not in over their heads in sewage to fix it. If they can't fight for us, we'll continue to fight for ourselves.

Beth Ann and Mark Elias, Jessica and Mark Tempest, Tim Rogers, Dan and Theresa Behm, Dan and Theresa Heitler, Margi Strombeck, Cindy Bullis, Joe Sardina, Tammy Bellreng, Jim Comerford, Donna Jaeger, Chuck Larson, Janelle Degregorio, Mrs. Martino, Mia and Dr. Frank Laurri, Nancy Goodroe, Fran Klein, Scott Meogrossi, Robert and Deann Brennen, John and Sara Hunter

Correction: The Lewiston Town Board accepted the retirement announcement of Town Clerk Donna Garfinkel, effective Oct. 4, at its Sept. 9 work session. No successor to the clerk's position was named by board members at the session.

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