

Planning for the Future, Osceola Wastewater Plant, City Move On Renovations

OSCEOLA, Iowa, July 21, 2015 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – A city's growth and continued development relies on up-to-date, effective wastewater treatment and regulation, according to the City of Osceola, Iowa. This is always a priority for city administrators, managers, and their employees. How they manage the updates and costs associated with them is often a reflection of the care and commitment they have to residents and businesses.

The City of Osceola's current wastewater plant, designed and built in the late 1970's, was showing the wear of community growth and time by the early 2000's. So, in 2003, the plant underwent significant updates to sustain much needed services and help with the growth we see today. These updates addressed issues like corrosion of lines, concrete and infrastructure, volume limitations, as well as state and federal regulation updates.

"That's pretty standard," said Donnie McCuddin, Superintendent of the city's wastewater plant. "In an aggressive atmosphere like ours, a wastewater plant will need upgrades about every 15 to 20 years."

Now, 12 years after the 2003 renovations, the City and the Water Treatment Plant have embarked on plans for updating to meet the most recent demand and Osceola's future growth, as well as updated DNR standards required by the next certification deadline.

"Clean water regulations are being ramped up and they're affecting everyone's permits," McCuddin stated. "They're reviewing issues at big plants, handling of a million gallons of wastewater or more, first. Osceola is just below that benchmark, so we wanted to start now, making sure we were proactive in our management and upkeep of the plant."

An estimated \$12 million will be needed to achieve the new wastewater plant renovation project. At an increase of 20 percent, this will affect rates for Osceola residents and businesses across the board. But, in an effort to lighten the burden, the city developed a plan to spread the rate increase out in 5 percent increments over the next few years. This computes to an annual increase of approximately 40 cents for average users. Businesses and residents alike will benefit from this slow distribution of costs over having the entire increase applied at once.

According to Ty Wheeler, Osceola's City Administrator, "While other similar-sized cities have applied the renovation update costs in a single rate increase – some as much as 65 percent – that just didn't bode well with us. So spreading the rate out over the next few years will make it easier on our residents as well as keep the cost of doing business in Osceola low."

DNR inspections are expected to take place at the Osceola plant within the next 12 to 18 months. If the necessary updates and repairs to the plant aren't made, Osceola could have their certification held or be fined until the issues are resolved.

"We've seen this on the horizon for almost five years, now. We can either plan now or pay later," said McCuddin. "They (DNR) appreciate the efforts that we are making. It happens everywhere. It's just something that needs to be done. And we wanted to do it right, for the plant, for our residents and businesses, as well as the future of Osceola."

Renovations to the wastewater plant will be complete, upgrading or completely replacing the current plant, by 2020. While some renovations have already started, the wastewater plant and the city will continue their sustainability and feasibility study, finishing by 2017. By 2019 a final wastewater plant design will be presented.

For more information on Osceola City, visit:
<http://www.osceolaia.govoffice2.com/>.

For more information on Clarke County, visit: <http://ClarkeCountyLife.com/>.

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* Photo Caption: Ty Wheeler, Osceola City Administrator.

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