

ARTICLE FROM THE 2020 FALL NEWSLETTER

Executive Committee Update

Submitted by Kevin Burd, Committee Chair

The MGCA Board of Managers is considering several issues related to maintaining the Campmeeting's infrastructure. This is the first of several communications intended to educate Members on those issues and steps the Board is taking to address them.

Earlier this year the Board determined that water was the number one priority to tackle this year. We continue to move forward. There have been challenges, barriers—a global pandemic—and a learning curve for this Board. We have risen to the occasion and continue to collect the facts to bring to the community in order to make an informed decision on how to best move forward and provide safe drinking water for generations to come. This article is intended to bring you the facts. In the future, communications regarding water may extend beyond this quarterly publication.

Campmeeting Water System Overview

For many years, the Campmeeting has operated its own water system. The system consists of two parts:

- Water production: Water is drawn from an MGCA-owned well, treated to ensure its purity and safety, and pumped into a large, elevated storage tank.
- Water distribution: Treated water is gravity-fed from the storage tank and distributed to the community through a network of underground pipes.

The MGCA is currently responsible for all aspects of the water system, including well operation, water treatment, daily testing, maintenance of the supply and distribution system, recordkeeping, and compliance with all Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regulations. All costs are paid from the MGCA General Assessment that you pay annually.

The Good News . . . and the Bad News

The good news is that the quality of our water is excellent. The bad news is that some components of our water production system are in poor condition and are needing costly repair or replacement. The Board of Managers has been consulting with an engineering firm to determine the best way to ensure that our community has a safe, reliable, and economical supply of water going forward.

Continue Producing Our Own Water

One option is to make the repairs/improvements necessary to continue producing our own water. On the positive side, our well produces a large volume of high-quality water. We also have a second well which, while disused, may have the potential to be reactivated. Producing our own water would let us avoid dependency on an outside provider and should ensure that we have a reliable supply of high-quality water at a reasonably predictable cost for many years.

The downside is that there would be large upfront costs to repair our system and keep it viable. The biggest expense would be for the water storage tank which was installed in 1947 and is in dire need of refurbishment or replacement. Refurbishment to extend the tank's life would cost

\$145,000 or more but would only be guaranteed for one year and was deemed by the engineering firm as “not a good candidate for asset management.” A replacement tank might cost considerably more, but with proper maintenance could last indefinitely.

Water From an Outside Provider

Another option may be to obtain our water from The Mt. Gretna Authority (MGA). The MGA was established in 1974 to operate and maintain the Mt. Gretna Borough’s water and sewer systems.

The MGA can already supply water to the Campmeeting in unusual situations through a temporary connection, but it may be possible to establish a connection to have the MGA supply our water on a permanent basis. The cost of water supplied by the MGA would depend on the terms of a negotiated agreement between the MGCA and MGA.

We have broached the subject of having exploratory discussions with the MGA. There would be many factors to consider in negotiating an agreement:

- Installing a permanent connection to the MGA system might cost \$60,000 or more. Who would bear that expense?
- Would the MGA assume responsibility for operating the MGCA wells and water production and treatment?
- If the MGA gained access to water from the MGCA well, how would we be credited for the value of that water?
- What would the initial cost of water be, and could we negotiate provisions to limit price increases?

The Campmeeting currently maintains the pipes and valves that make up our water distribution system. The system is already in need of updating and as the system ages, we can expect it to require more maintenance. In negotiating an agreement for MGA to supply our water, we could seek to include provisions for the MGA to assume responsibility for maintaining our water distribution system as well.

Summary

Our highest priority is to ensure that the Campmeeting water supply is safe and reliable. We also want it to be economical, and we must consider both up-front and long-term costs. The Board is currently working to determine costs associated with each of the options under consideration. The future of our water supply is an issue the Board of Managers has been discussing for several years but it is one that must be decided soon. Look for more information in future communications as we continue to address this issue.