

CITY STAFF ON PUBLIC PROPERTY AS CARETAKER/SECURITY

In 2018/2019, the City of Harrisburg responded to the requirements of the America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (AWIA). Homeland Security, and more specifically, their department of Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, required that Cities start protecting their public facilities and infrastructure from malevolent acts, and terrorism. The City of Harrisburg, like other cities with a population over 3,300, filed a Certified Risk and Resilience Assessment report and matrix, which specifically addressed vulnerabilities existing in our infrastructure. An Emergency Response Report accompanied the matrix. Many communities use the Willamette River as part of their drinking water source requirements. It is therefore important for the City of Harrisburg to adequately protect the Willamette River and our infrastructure from vandalism.

The location of the Harrisburg Wastewater Facility is north of the City; the sewer lagoons are on property adjacent to the Willamette River. The City lagoon consists of a large area with four different settling ponds. This area is approximately 2,500' ft. long, and 800' wide. There is an outfall pipe located next to a slough in the Willamette River. During the winter, this allows treated water to re-enter the river system. The City's wastewater treatment includes approximately 58 acres of poplar forest adjacent to the ponds. These are part of our overall wastewater system and allow effluent to dissipate in the trees during the summer months.

Some of the engineering controls that the City could use to protect this area includes fencing, and security systems to be installed. The City couldn't afford the approximately \$213,445 needed for fencing in the lagoons. (At Non-BOLI wages; our fence would cost far more in terms of labor costs). Nor could we afford the security system that should be installed. The City also assessed probable security patrol costs; at just 20 hours every weekend, the annual charge would be approximately \$46,280.

Our Public Works Director, who is on-call 24/7 as our main certified operator of both the water and wastewater system, was staying in his RV providing security for an area farmer. He takes our regulatory requirements, especially security, very seriously. Therefore, he left a space that was free, with free water, power, and sewer hookups, in order to put his RV on the edge of the wastewater lagoons. This space is less than 565' to the secondary wastewater lagoon, 820' to the north to the Willamette River, 945' to the west to the Willamette River, and is directly next to a backwater slough of the Willamette. During the summer, it fills with algae, duckweed, and mosquitoes. The outfall station is also located adjacent to this location, within 10' to 20'. There is no shade, power, or water. Therefore, he uses solar to provide power, and needs to fill up his water, and dump his sewer, (at a regular sewage dump station, according to law), on a regular basis. This City employee provides the City with security services at this location, sacrificing his comfort and devoting himself to taking care of City assets to his own detriment.

This location is not available to the public, because of the proximity of the wastewater facility. City employees must go through Hepatitis A & B vaccinations and maintain their immunity to be allowed in these areas. To enter the property during times in which they are not working, they are required to follow security protocol, and must log in to the City's system notifying and tracking their presence in off hours. Therefore, this area is not subject for going through a public process.

The City discussed this issue at the meetings held on April 11, 2023, and finalized discussion at the meeting of May 9, 2023. The City Council did not feel that there was a problem with this use of the property, particularly because the Public Works director is using the presence of his RV at this location as a deterrent to vandalism, and also acts as security during nights and weekends. They directed Staff to work on an agreement with the Public Works Director to address this situation. An internal policy that addressed the caretaker at the City Facility to act as a security presence was negotiated, along with solutions to issues such as how to respond to citizens trespassing on City property, along with other situations typical to this type of a position as a caretaker. The City also finalized amendments to the job description to meet the requirements of the IRS.

The Public Works Director responds to trespass issues in the middle of the night, and in the early morning hours. He patrols the poplar forest and runs the occasional trespasser away from this area. He has deterred people who were landing on the section of the bank in between the river and the slough and has stopped people who took advantage of a broken gate to drive to the wastewater facility after midnight. (There have been more incidents) The farmer leasing this area and farms the vacant part of property here confirms that he has less theft by the presence of the RV in this location.

The City stands behind the actions of our Public Works Director and supports the fact that he is providing services protecting vulnerable infrastructure, which ultimately saves our taxpayers money. He is a veteran, and a man of integrity, and values. He joined our community in 2013 and has since dedicated and volunteered hundreds of hours of his time to be the Vice-President and one of the founding members of the Harrisburg Harvest Festival Association. He protects the City at this location. The City feels that this is the same service that he has provided since he moved his RV to the wastewater facility in 2019.

To find the materials and discussion by the City Council, please go to the Agendas and Minutes, and find the staff report, and minutes for the meeting held on May 9th, 2023. The map shared with the City Council at the April meeting is attached to this report. Any citizen with concerns about this process and the decisions of the City Council are invited to discuss this at any of our future meetings. The Council meeting schedule is on-line; and generally meets on the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays of each month (except for July, Nov & Dec). Further questions can be directed to the City Administrator.



WW Facility RV Location

820' to Willamette River

Outfall Location

945' to Willamette River

565' feet to WW Secondary Pond

Willamette River



Google Earth