

Village District of Eidelweiss Annual Report

The big rainstorm in April did enormous damage to the roads in several of the towns around here including Madison but the District survived remarkably well and was quickly reimbursed by FEMA. To compound this damage the water system suffered a lightening strike during a severe storm that ruptured two water lines. Repairs were quickly accomplished. The major road project this past fall was the reconstruction of the paved section of Blinden Drive. The District escaped the ruts generated by accelerating from a dead stop to get into the ever increasing traffic on Rte 113 at the ends of Alpenhof, Sarnen and Grison by paving the intersections. Water projects included replacement of an old iron pipe on Oak Ridge that produced very rusty water and the installation of some new shut off valves.

The Commissioners initially proposed going back to the Annual Meeting for a long term bond to fund the improvements to the water system recommended in the Master Plan but following two public hearings in January they voted 2-1 not to proceed with it at this time. More preparation time is needed and the issue was further complicated by two petitioned articles on this year's warrant. One article is seeking to restore the \$50 annual fee and charge the remainder of the water system costs to taxes. The other article would like all water system improvements charged to all property owners as a flat fee in addition to the water bill. These issues need to be resolved before proceeding with a bond.

The housing market continues to slow down which may give the District some breathing room to address the challenges presented to the water system by increasing development. The year 2007 was the last one for the water hook up lottery and several of the winners did not exercise their option to build. The lottery was initiated in 2005 for a three year period in response to explosive growth in the previous three years. It provided an opportunity to update the Master Plan for the water system which was accomplished in 2006. A description of the water system and a synopsis of the plan will shortly be available on the web site (vdoe-nh.org).

Future water hook ups in the District will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Briefly, new water connections need a minimum working pressure of 35psi to satisfy State regulations and they must not affect the water pressure for other houses on the same line. In other words, no one should be reduced to a dribble when everyone turns on the shower at the same time. The complexity of the existing system arises largely from the terrain with booster pumping stations and pressure reducing valves scattered through the District. As a consequence there are several different pressure zones and the distribution lines in parts of the system, while adequate for current needs, may not be able to accommodate future development. There are currently just over 400 houses on the system, and on paper, at least, enough undeveloped lots for doubling the number of homes. When the economy improves we can anticipate another surge in growth.

Another issue addressed in 2007 was where to charge the cost of maintaining the water system. Since time began, the water fee in Eidelweiss has been a flat rate but at \$50 per year it bore no relation to the actual costs of the water system. That was covered in property taxes which are determined, in part, by the individual property value which, in turn, bears no relation to the costs of the water system. Until such time as there are water meters the flat rate will prevail. In 2007 the Commissioners took the costs out of the taxes and charged property owners on the system a flat rate of \$350 for the year. Given the challenge of future

growth, even the State does not consider water meters the highest priority in Eidelweiss at this time. In addition, the cost for installing, reading and maintaining meters is quite significant. It should also be recognized that water meters will likely have a marginal impact upon the water rate since the costs of pumping more water to this house compared with another is only a fraction of the total costs of having water available when the taps are turned on.

The previous system of hiding the true costs of the water system in the taxes was patently unfair on land owners, those with wells and those with high property values. A part time water front owner with a well with property valued at \$400,000 actually paid somewhere close to \$800 in 2006 for a water system from which they receive no benefit whatsoever. At the other end of the scale, a full time resident with a family but with property valued at \$100,000 paid \$50 plus around \$200 in taxes. We believe the present system is at least heading into a fairer one albeit with some way to go.

In other matters the Commissioners have moved to clarify the use of the radio tower on the top of Oak Ridge which is used by the Radio Station and RCC, a cell tower company, and are in the process of clarifying what is up there now and negotiating an agreement of any future activities.

The District hosted the fall meeting of the Executive Board of the New Hampshire Association of Village Districts at the Lodge. Two local State legislators attended and there was a presentation from the Department of Environmental Services on grant programs and a mutual aid program for water systems.

The Commissioners continue to be concerned over the protection, or lack of it, for the aquifer that supplies water not only for Eidelweiss but much of Madison. We find the expressed preference by the Town fathers for commercial development in place of an aggressive defense of such a valuable resource to be puzzling. Sources of high quality water, which is what we currently have, are not easily come by and the Commissioners recently met with their opposite number in Conway Village to discuss a potential interconnection between our two systems in case of emergencies.

Madison's revamping of their website and changing the procedure for accessing it prompted the District to establish its own site (vdoe-nh.org) which can now be accessed directly or from the Madison site (madison-nh.org) under "Links". In addition to the usual access to ordinances, District information, minutes and email (office@vdoe-nh.org) the site has also been used to report on progress on construction projects such as Blinden Dr this past fall and for emergency purposes such as the lightening strikes up at Reinach which zapped the pump station and cracked a water line. Coming shortly is a miscellaneous section containing such odd ball bits as to why the edelweiss flower doesn't get sunburn.

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