

Developers – coming your way fast!

Yes, the title of this article is a familiar one. It's the same as one of seven handbooks in the *Water Board Bibles Series* written and edited by KRWA General Manager, Elmer Ronnebaum, and Ellen Miller, Ellen Miller and Associates, and others. Written in 1999 the book is not outdated by any means. *Developers – coming your way fast!* has great value especially for a score of communities in the Fort Riley area where military realignments will see an influx of more than 4,500 duty personnel plus their families. This estimate of total population increase is closer to 25,000 people! So board and council members – sharpen your pencils! Get your calculators updated to

help make good decisions regarding developers and their plans to come to Kansas communities wanting to build – and build fast.

I have talked to several community leaders where developers want to build 350 homes. At 2.5 people per connection it would add up to 875

people – in just one development! All of that sounds good now, because of a higher tax base and a conclusion that there'll be plenty of money going into the general fund as well as more money for water and sewer funding. This is true up to a point, but the big picture is that of a community needing to add infrastructure to handle the increased volume. A

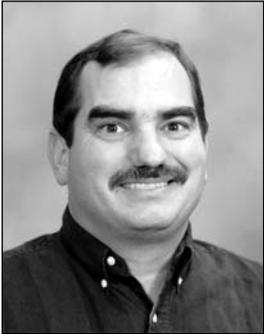
growing community may also need an additional lagoon, or mechanical treatment plant or need to employ additional staff to handle the increased service demands for water, sewer, streets, police and fire. One manager told a developer that the community could not handle that many people on the present water and sewer systems and that additional schools would also be needed. The one single new development would more than double the size of the community.

Having visited with the mayor in one Kansas town, I found out that his community, according to their engineer, can accommodate only another 150 people or 60 homes, with the existing water and sewer system. The problem is that

address the sudden increase in population are so unique and formidable that many are ill equipped to address them.

Where to start?

Communities wanting to evaluate capacity to provide additional services need to conduct a detailed inventory of existing infrastructure. For example, wastewater facilities should have a design population for the treatment plants. The information can usually be found on page one of the wastewater treatment permit. One town administrator interviewed has looked into this noting that the community population is already at 1650 people. A developer wants to build eight, 36 unit apartment buildings, or 288 units total.



Charlie Schwindamann
Wastewater Tech

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he is not sure if any landowners, who are all farmers, will want to sell property for a development. In utilizing the city's systems, the area would logically be annexed into the city. Another option would be to not annex the area and then impose outside city rates.

It is apparent that every community has varying capacities. Some have land but lack in water or wastewater treatment facilities. Other communities have adequate utilities but have no land. The challenges of the communities in the vicinity of Fort Riley to

Multiply 288 by 2.5 for 720 additional residents for a new total of 2380 residents. The community is one of the lucky ones – the present wastewater treatment plant is designed for a population of 2500. That growth target was originally projected over a 20-year period, so it's obvious that the time to review future utility needs will be much sooner.

Regarding a water utility, I suggest that water rights be investigated first. For example, a system may have water rights that appropriate 120 million gallons

One city that said no, and then said yes — to development by Dan Knupp

The relatively young town of Milford sits on the east central shore of the reservoir named after the original town-site that now lies below the water's surface. Only one structure remains of the original town — still there only because its location is high enough on the hill to have missed the grasp of the filling reservoir.

The on-going development frenzy over the slated return of *The Big Red 1* to Fort Riley has spurred developers to visit officials in Milford. An offer was made to build a 250-home development in and around the town. Steve Meyer, city superintendent, explained, "The developer wanted the town to foot the bill for all the development's utilities. Our total tax base is only \$1.25 million — we couldn't begin to get financing to do that, even though our present utilities would certainly be able to handle 250 new homes!"

The community said no, having to bide time after seeing dreams of growth, prosperity and increased budget money move on down the road. Good things come to those who wait, and administrators didn't have to wait long. Another developer made an offer that fit Milford's budget and was one that the city couldn't refuse.

A full city block of Milford just west of the city park was purchased with a plan to build 10 duplexes with the developer picking up the tab for the entire development infrastructure. Two 450-foot water mains and one sewer main have been installed to service the duplexes. The city pitched in providing meter pits, hardware for the new mains, and time from Steve Meyer and his assistant, Randy McWilliams, to coordinate the construction by J & K Contracting of Junction City. A construction crew from Onaga is also hard at work building the first of the 10 duplexes with the others quick to follow.

The \$1.5 to \$2 million project will provide homes for new residents with the preliminary word from the U.S. Army being that many new troops will stay on station at Ft. Riley for several years. Good news for a small community looking for friends, neighbors and some new money in town. The Milford water system uses surface water from the reservoir and the town's wastewater capabilities are more than adequate for the expected new residents.

According to Steve, there has only been one small irony in the new development, "That last home from the original town-site will be razed to make room for one of the new duplexes. But I guess that's progress we can live with."



Left: Milford City Superintendent Steve Meyer stands over one of the new development project manholes.

Below: The new east water main with the original town-site home seen at the end of the line, behind the tree.



Below: Steve Meyer and Randy McWilliams troubleshoot a gas line that the machine operator is trying to cross.



Above: The west water main runs in front of the duplex under construction.

Left: A worker directs the bucket as the operator digs around assembled sewer main pipe.



Preparing for developers

- Set long-term goals — such as is the community pro-growth or does it want to stay as is.
- Consistency – this will save your community from lawsuits by treating everyone fairly. Ordinances and zoning regulations will help with this.
- Standardize the process. Have a checklist the developer can follow so that the community will know what the developer wants to do and how they plan on proceeding to accomplish the goals.
- Talk with neighbors. If you haven't had to deal with developers prior to now, then talk to neighboring cities to see what they've done that works and even what has not.
- Maintain standards. Every part of the ordinances you have must pass inspection. If it's questionable it could be a problem and the larger the development the larger the problems.

A question of money

Remember, if you add 350 homes to an existing 8-inch sewer main that already serves 400 homes, it probably isn't large enough and the entire line size should be increased. Who pays for this – the developer or the system? If a lift

station is added – who pays for installation? Who maintains it? Who owns it? All these and many more questions can be answered by having zoning regulations in place. The Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment requires that a licensed engineer design extensions to wastewater lines. Who pays for the engineering and design cost? The methods and procedures must be consistent no matter if it's a developer wanting to add three homes or 350 homes. Everyone needs to be treated equally.

Stay in charge

There are three major reasons for taking charge of any meeting to make sure that developers not walk over the city council. First is there are state and local regulations to follow. Next, present customers must be protected. The last and most important is that the city or RWD will eventually own the infrastructure. So pipe, hydrants and lift stations need to be specified as those that you want to have in your system. This keeps parts inventory simpler and more cost effective. Keeping all equipment and material of similar manufacturer or quality also reduces maintenance problems later on. Specifications for this equipment needs to be agreed to by the system.

(This material taken from *Developers – coming your way fast!*, Kansas Rural Water Association, P. 7, 1995.)

annually. In a scenario where the new development increases pumping needs over that quantity, the community or RWD will need to obtain additional water rights as well as the capacity to provide it to new customers. KRWA's Ground Water, Water Rights Tech, Doug Helmke, is available to provide help and review water rights issues.

The sidebar printed above details some good advice from the KRWA handbook. The biggest issue to have covered is not the

land or the capacity; it is the legal ramifications. Items such as land use plans, zoning rules/regulations, ordinances stating who pays for what including charges for sewer or water connections, and where meters are to be located are just a few of the legal details.

Remember, that new development is coming to stay and it needs to be carefully planned. This planning will not only affect new residents moving into the development but in some cases, it

will affect people who have lived in the community for many years.

If further discussion or information is needed regarding water or wastewater system improvements, call KRWA at 785/ 336.3760 or visit the Association Web site: www.krwa.net.

KRWA staff members are pleased to attend city council and RWD board meetings or attend special work sessions. Give us a call.

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