

September 14, 2006

I'm getting more questions about sewer availability and was wondering how your cities are dealing with the issue.

Is sewer service available when buildings are located at a lower elevation than the public sewer line?

Are they compelling property owners to install grinder pumps when their private system is still functioning properly?

Are they charging a sewer bill to those using septic systems?

Do they charge the full bill or just a minimum bill?

Thanks,

Brett Ward

September 15, 2006

Brett,

My experience is probably the answer that you don't want to hear, it is all over the board as to what cities do with sewer service and billings:

1. If service is available and the elevation problem is on the customer side, many cities will require the customer to install a pump and connect. The major drawback to the city is that the pump is the responsibility of the customer who may or may not maintain it.
2. As to those on septic systems things are real fuzzy. The standard sewer use ordinance and TCA both give cities the authority to compel connections, and some cities do that when/if service is available (normally allowing some reasonable period of time for the customer to connect). Other cities don't compel connection but bill the customer; most for just the base charge, but I know a few who charge the full usage bill. Unless there is a major septic problem (system failure), I usually recommend that they don't compel connection until the system fails, but bill the base charge.
3. One other thought on this is that if the city has debt they may want to check with the lender or the loan documents as they may specify that connections must be made.

Bill Young
Utility Finance/Finance Consultant
Municipal Technical Advisory Service
(865) 974-9821