

Study eyes landfill, recycling operation

By Nathan Johnson

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In an effort to eliminate its annual deficit and improve its services, the Joint Vermillion/Yankton Solid Waste System is undergoing a study of its operations.

Consulting firm HDR, Inc., was awarded a contract earlier this year to complete the evaluation, which is expected to be done by the end of September.

"What they'll do is put together a plan that would help us run more efficiently, take more recyclables in or whatever the case may be," said Bob Iverson, director of the solid waste system. "We haven't had a master plan that I know of, so it was time to get one to decide what would be the best way to do the landfill. We wanted to look at the recycling part of it, also."

The system is currently facing a variety of challenges – chief among

them being an annual deficit of approximately \$130,000.

On July 28, the Joint Powers Advisory Board voted to recommend that tipping fees be raised as a way to begin to address the deficit. The 10 percent increase would amount to approximately \$4 extra per ton, coming to a total of \$40 per ton.

Tipping fees have not been raised since 2002, and the cost to operate per ton has exceeded the current fee.

"This would do something to create a stop-gap as the final, long-range study is being done on the facility," Yankton City Manager Doug Russell said recently, noting that tipping fees account for only about 12 percent of the total operating costs. "It's not going to have as huge of an impact as 10 percent may seem."

The Yankton City Commission is expected to consider the increase at next Monday's meeting.

Another challenge is that a new

trench will soon be needed at the landfill approximately four miles north of Vermillion. According to Yankton Finance Officer Al Viereck, who attends the joint power meetings, it is a complicated decision to determine how deep to dig the trench, which would make it last longer, as well as how to incorporate a new leachate system. The current leachate system is at capacity and new regulations also require an updated mode of disposal.

Leachate is the liquid material that drains from the landfill and must be collected.

The study will also examine the costs and benefits of various recycling methods. Yankton and Vermillion currently use a curbside method wherein residents are asked to sort materials before they are put out for collection. The items are also sorted by solid waste employees as they are placed into the collection vehicle. Other options would be dual stream,

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BOB IVERSON

where residents are asked to sort containers in one curbside bin and papers in another, and single stream.

"Single stream is where the resident would put everything in one container and then it would be picked up for sorting at a main facility," Iverson said. "Single stream is probably more expensive because you need the equipment to sort it. However, you could get more participation with single stream. And with more recycling, the landfill would last longer."

Considering all these factors can be

a complicated mass of facts and figures, and Iverson hopes the study helps clarify options for those involved in the operation, as well as the public.

Meetings for the public are being planned for Yankton and Vermillion to allow residents to weigh in on possible changes.

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After visiting, he said the areas that did or did not suffer damages did not always line up with expectations.

"I noticed that places I thought would be habitable are (under) water. Other places ... looked good, but there was water damage in the basements," Johnson said.

Raymond Roggow, emergency management director of Union County, said "you couldn't out-guess" much of the water damage.

"As a matter of fact, last week

some homes came into our public information office that just had water for the first time. It just doesn't make sense, but that's what's happened," Roggow said.

He added that while public buildings "weren't affected that bad," 56 homes in Dakota Dunes were located near the river.

"Of those 56, 46 of those were really hit hard," he said. "When we get on up into Deer Run, get on up into Windstone, those homes obviously had groundwater issues. Windstone got real close to having floodwater issues, but they were able to hold it back."

The county road system is fine, but township roads show some devastation, Roggow said.

"Some of that's been under 12

feet of water yet, so we don't know what that's going to look like until the water levels go down," he said.

Additionally, residents displaced from their homes probably won't get to return to them until September, Roggow added.

Clay County Commissioner Leo Powell said much of the damage in Clay County was on private land, although the county did provide sand in some areas.

In areas such as the Ponderosa, residents pooled their resources to stop floodwaters.

"If they hadn't put probably \$500,000 worth of rock in there, they probably wouldn't be there," Powell said. "I'm pretty sure the river would have cut

that bank off. If you look at the front yards of some of those houses and then look back upstream, the water's coming right at them.

"It's the same thing at the mouth of the Vermillion River," he said. "From the west side of the county to the east side of the county there's been some bank erosion, some flooding, some homes and cabins that have been washed away. But everybody worked pretty hard stabilizing it."

Clay County Emergency Manager Layne Stewart added that "most of the township damage" is 3 to 4 miles north of the mouth of the Vermillion River.

Johnson acknowledged the contributions private citizens put forth in the effort.

"The government puts out 75 percent of the revenue necessary to replace the materials, but the state contributes 10 percent," he said. "But the other 15 percent belongs to the local people, and we hope that FEMA ... contributes more private help, besides public help."

The senator said this may not be a realistic goal, but "we need to recognize that private help, in past experience, ranges from \$2,000-\$3,000 apiece. Nobody's getting rich off of private help."

Roggow said FEMA has helped Union County by providing a check for approximately

\$312,000. Before that, some emergency funding had to be taken from the county's highway department.

"(The FEMA funding) has really been helpful to keep our cash flow intact," he said. "So, FEMA has been great in that respect, so my hat's off to them for coming down and getting that accomplished so we have some actual cash to work with again."

Johnson said he plans to continue his tour of flooded areas this week.

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respected for intellect, her calm demeanor and her quiet commitment to a fair and open judiciary. Every person I consulted spoke in the very highest terms about Judge Wilbur."

Supreme Court Chief Justice David Gilbertson planned to swear Wilbur into office as a justice during a ceremony late Tuesday afternoon at the University of South Dakota Law School in Vermillion.

Wilbur received her law degree from USD in 1977. She was an assistant state attorney general and a lawyer for the South Dakota Board of Regents, the Legislature and the state Bureau of Personnel. She became a magistrate judge in

1992 and took the bench as a circuit judge in 1999 after winning an election in 1998. Since 2007 she has been presiding judge of the 6th Judicial Circuit, which covers 14 counties in central and south-central South Dakota.

Wilbur will represent the 4th Supreme Court District, which covers 17 counties in southeastern South Dakota. She is moving to that district, which will allow her to live closer to her mother and two daughters. Wilbur said she has rented an apartment in Lincoln County and registered to vote there, complying with legal requirements that she live in the Supreme Court district she represents.

Wilbur praised Meierhenry as a trailblazer with wisdom and experience.

"I hope I can do half as good a job as Justice Meierhenry,"

Wilbur told The Associated Press.

Wilbur said she loved working as a circuit judge and hadn't thought much about moving to the Supreme Court until some people encouraged her to consider it. She said she was humbled that the governor chose her from a pool of candidates who applied for the appointment.

"Each of us brings to our work, whatever that work is, our lifetime of experience and our values. In my experience, the people of this state expect courteous and prompt resolution of their disputes by judges and justices who apply the law fairly and impartially," Wilbur said.

Daugaard said he was struck by a comment Wilbur made when he interviewed her for the appointment.

"When I asked her why she

would be a good justice, she told me that she lives by the same three rules that she asks her DUI defendants to follow: 'Show up, try hard and be honest.' That is a simple and eloquent statement of the values that make South Dakota great," the governor said.

Wilbur said she will continue to follow those three rules.

"I plan to be dedicated and work hard at this job because it's an awesome responsibility to the citizens of this state," she said.

Vermillion School Elementary Open House

Wednesday, August 24th

Austin School: 6-7pm
Jolley School: 6:30-7:30pm

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