

# **Hawk Springs voices sewer concerns**

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BY: Jerry Abbott

The Hawk Springs community is concerned about water pollution in their area. According to Dennis Simmons, spokesperson for the Hawk Springs community members who discussed the matter with the Goshen County Commissioners at their meeting on Tuesday, "antiquated" septic systems near wells have caused concerns about waste and sewage.

"We voted to pursue a sewage system for solid waste problems," Simmons said. "We need crucial funding to get this project started."

According to Simmons, the Hawk Springs Water and Sewer District has been formed but was unable to get any projects "off the ground." Simmons said he met with the state water development office on Monday and learned that the Hawk Springs Water and Sewer District was still a valid entity. In 1944, the county attorney advised the community to let the district go dormant. He said the Hawk Springs community needed funding to pursue legal advice on how to proceed to obtain a sewer system for the community.

Simmons also said new officers would be needed to activate the Hawk Springs Water and Sewer District.

According to Goshen County Attorney Patrick Korell, there is still a question regarding whether the water and sewer district can be renewed or needs to be re-established.

"As a valid entity of the county the district would be able to make assessments to obtain funding, they would make required annual filings to the state and they would transact business," Korell said. "My concern is with the dormancy issue, the State Department of Audit and the Goshen County Assessor's office have taken them off of the books. No business was transacted and no tax revenues were collected."

Commissioner Ross Newman asked if the county could find out if the Hawk Springs Water and Sewer District was a legal entity. According to Korell, the Hawk Springs Water and Sewer District has a good set of bylaws, which could mean they are not far from being re-established. Korell said he could issue a formal opinion on the status of the district to the commissioners in 20-30 days.

Korell expressed concern, however that because he represents the county commissioners and not the Hawk Springs community, in some cases he may be called upon to represent the county in legal issues involving Hawk Springs. However, he said that he could issue a legal opinion on whether the district is a legal entity if requested by the commissioners. Commissioner Robert Ward asked that Korell render this legal opinion.

Korell said he should have the opinion ready by the commissioner meeting on May 6.

He told the commissioners that until the Hawk Springs Water and Sewer District was determined to be a valid county entity, the county should not provide funding to them. Commissioner Chairman Jim Hudelson said that once the Hawk Springs Water and Sewer District is declared a valid entity, there are a number of grants they can apply for through USDA Rural Development and through Wyrulec programs.

Simmons said the situation was a "chicken and the egg" scenario since the district cannot get legal counsel to become an entity without funding and they cannot file an application for funding without being a legal entity.

In other action:

Goshen County engineer Bob Taylor and Torrington Director of Utilities Jim Foster met with the commissioners about rights of way for utilities and roads. Foster said the city of Torrington and the county could work together and leverage their position in obtaining rights of way that can otherwise take two or three years to obtain.

Newman said the county and city should address as many encroachments on rights of way as possible but that the land owners involved would need to help themselves and come to the table to negotiate.

Taylor said that there are several roads in the area where utility easements are needed and that the county and city can get more done working together.

Taylor said he is coordinating with South Torrington on the roads that will be replaced as part of their water and sewer project. The plan is to grind up and reuse the existing asphalt, then supplement it with other base material to raise the road surface by up to a foot in some places. According to Taylor, this measure will improve drainage affecting the roads. Newman noted that with the water, sewer and road improvements currently being made to South Torrington, it would be a prime area for development.

The Prison Road is being reshaped, Taylor said. McMurry has set up a hot asphalt plant and will prime the road on Wednesday afternoon, and on Friday morning a test strip will be analyzed. If the testing is positive, paving of the Prison Road will begin Monday.

Jeff Edwards, Goshen County ag educator and county coordinator, discussed several issues with the commissioners regarding the Goshen County Resource Center (formerly the Goshen County Research and Extension Office). Last Friday Jamie Mehling submitted her resignation as the county 4-H educator. The earliest that a replacement will be hired is just before the county fair.

The commissioners agreed that Edwards could hire a part-time person to work on issues crucial to the 4-H program. Edwards is meeting with the other 4-H leaders to explain that he will count on them more in the absence of the 4-H educator.

n The county commissioners were given a sketch of a plan to landscape the front of the resource center developed by the Goshen County Master Gardeners. The new landscaping will highlight native species of shrubs and trees. Newman expressed concerns about poor drainage in the area. Edwards said he would contact Taylor to survey the area in question to identify drainage issues.