



Ed Sadler

CITY SCENE

1st Quarter 2009

Water: Out of Sight, Out of Mind

by Ed Sadler, City Manager

The City of Webster City, like most towns, provides numerous forms of infrastructure to its citizens that facilitate the operation of commerce and makes everyday living easier.

The City provides streets, electricity, street lights, storm water control, drinking water and wastewater, just to name a few. When roads are in poor shape, we all see them and have to deal with them, as we do with the street lights and the power poles. What we don't get to see are all of the water related activities that a town provides, because very few people see the water plant and wastewater plant on a daily basis and all of the lines are underground. As long as water comes out when we turn on the tap, and as long as everything disappears down the drains, all must be good. RIGHT?

Remember the old car commercial about changing your oil that stated "pay me now, or pay me later"? It's the same thing with infrastructure for things like water plants and wastewater plants. As a rule of thumb, these plants will last about 30 years. Some parts like pumps, valves, etc last 10-15 years, while the large tanks and the buildings themselves will last about 40 years without major work, therefore the 30 year average. With that in mind, a prudent town should put away 1/30th of the cost of replacement (adjusted for inflation) away each year to keep a plant in good operational condition. When this is not done, this is when a new plant needs to be built, or substantially rebuilt, and about the only way a town can then afford this is through a major bond issue. The bond issue then raises the rates substantially so that the town can both afford to operate the new plant AND pay off the bonds, AND hopefully start putting money away for the future and therefore avoid the same dilemma again.

During the late 60's and 70's, the federal government not only promulgated several new rules to insure better water quality for drinking and what flowed into the rivers, it also had numerous grant and low cost loan programs to fund the necessary construction needed to meet these requirements. Most towns in the nation took advantage of these programs and built what at that time were state of the art water and sewer plants. This assured good drinking water and cleaner water entering the rivers. Most sewage lagoons were abandoned and only rural areas were then using septic tanks. If you then assume that most facilities were built in the 60's and 70's, they are now 30 to 40 years old. Some of these plants have been kept up rather well and have been updated as needed. Others have been sorely neglected and are now in serious trouble due to the neglect, with no money to fix them, and the federal programs really don't exist anymore. The federal government truly expected towns to take care of the facilities that they had helped to build, but many did not. As you look around the nation, many towns are plagued with serious drinking water, wastewater and stormwater issues. You don't even have to look very far away. Just look to our neighbors. For the most part, it was way too easy for people to keep rates low and pay only for operational costs rather than pay for the future. Like I mentioned above, this is very much like your car and deciding that it is cheaper to skip the oil change, tune ups, and other maintenance until the day the engine fails. Pay me now, or pay me later, and paying later is almost always more expensive.

A few years back, Webster City put some fairly substantial money into its wastewater plant and had to bond to perform the work. The sewer rates reflect this cost and this is why sewer rates

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Opportunities Are Where You Make Them

by Gary Sandholm, Webster City Area Development

Recently I was in Cleveland for a supply chain workshop hosted by the American Wind Energy Association. While we heard pitches from the Governor of Ohio and other elected officials and had the financial situation of the Big 3 auto companies in front of us, Iowa was clearly a bright spot in the sky above the wind industry. Ten Iowa regional marketing groups including the Mid Iowa Development Partnership to which we belong hosted a reception that attracted about 150 of the 780 people registered for the workshop. Realizing that the programming of the workshop was very optimistic about the wind industry, the next twenty years still hold very high potential for Iowa if we are able to provide the workforce, industrial capacity, and infrastructure.

While the workshop was clearly a big picture matter, I met two people – taxi drivers – that provided dramatic contrasts in the lives of “Joe the Taxi Driver.” For background, Cleveland’s general economy is bad. Unemployment was 7.4% a couple of months ago, and I don’t think it has improved recently. It is at the heart of the Midwest Rust Belt.

Late Sunday evening on the drive from the airport to the hotel, my driver was making conversation asking why I was in Cleveland,

what I do for a living, and other ordinary small talk. The dialogue got deeper as we talked about wind turbines and the economy. The fellow seemed to be much more intelligent than the typical taxi driver, and as we neared the hotel, I asked if he had considered additional education. He replied that he had been an English teacher before coming to the U.S. He also had studied engineering at Cleveland State University, but he lost his job through downsizing and was driving a cab to make a living. I suggested that he look at Webster City to better use his abilities which seemed reasonably good.

Wednesday morning, the taxi driver was another “recent” resident of the U.S. He came from Morocco about seven years ago to visit relatives. Being able to speak three languages – none of them English – he wound up working at the Cleveland Clinic Guest House scrubbing toilets. Rapid advancement followed with various positions at the Guest House, and he gained a good command of the English language. Taking advantage of an opportunity, he started his own taxi company and now has five cabs. Difficulty finding good drivers has hampered faster growth.

Two people with similar occupations, both immigrants, and widely different career trajectories. One was better educated but got caught in the maelstrom of a declining economy. The other started clearly at the bottom and has risen to a middle class entrepreneur.

The lesson for Webster City: We have many resources such as a good educational system, a good community with many amenities, a desirable location with good surface transportation, and we have a safe, comfortable lifestyle. If we use our resources to continually build a better community, our future is bright. If we rest upon past accomplishments, we will be passed by communities that may have less to offer but have a will to succeed. Our local economy is still weathering the recession much better than most of the country. Wind energy may provide great opportunities in the near future. Let’s make the best use of our resources and play to win.



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WATER: OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND
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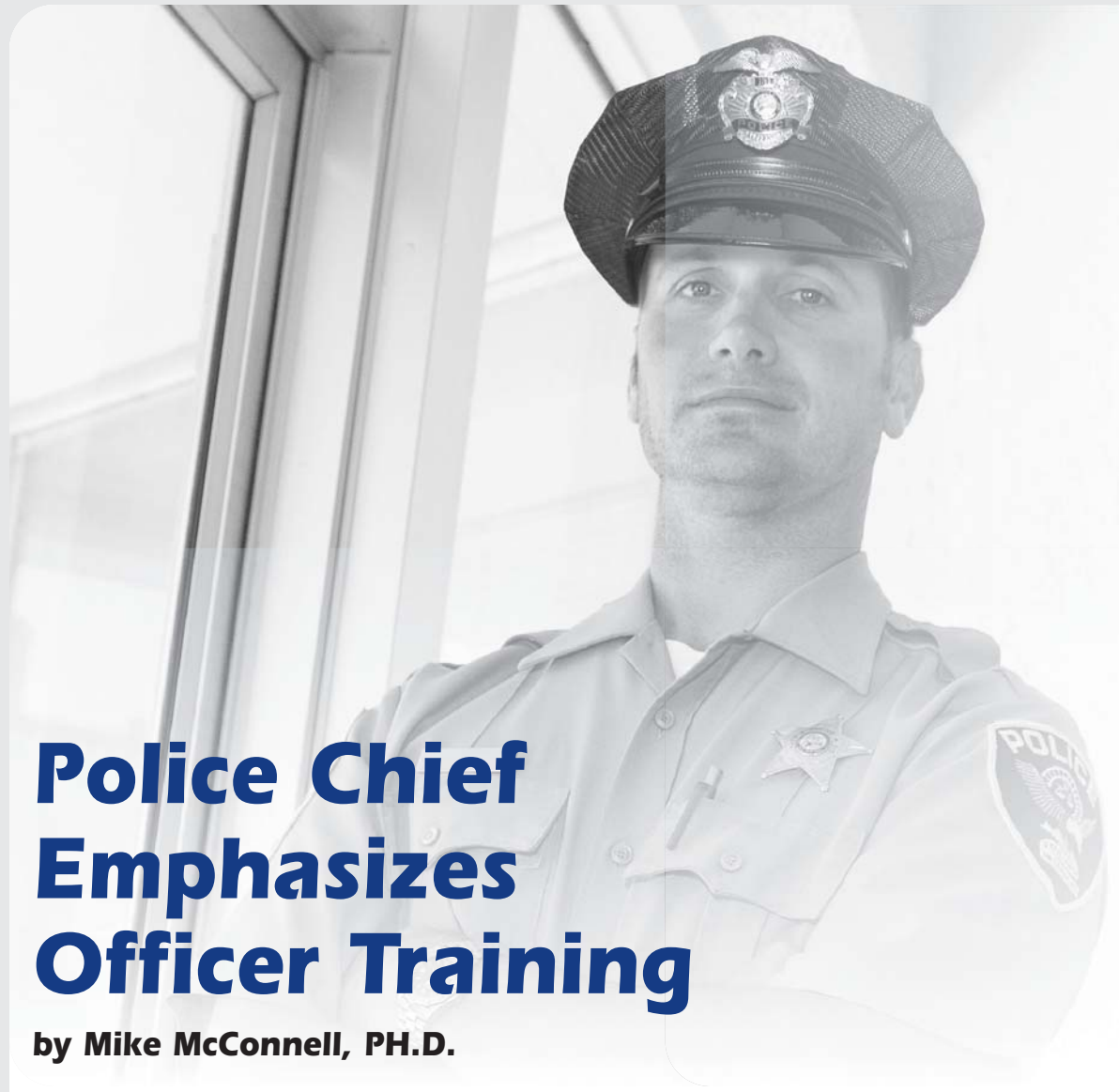
are higher than water rates in Webster City. The water plant for the most part has only made repairs as things break and we have had no choice. Our water plant is now 30 years old and we have only managed to put aside money to do some minimal replacement of water lines. We also recently added to monthly bills a well surcharge fee to help pay for a new well which we will need in a couple years, but that is it for the most part. Considering how similar water plants and wastewater plants are, it makes sense that water and sewer rates should be very similar if they are to be taken care of in the same manner. The City recently completed what is referred to as an "asset management plan" for both water and wastewater. The study was completed to not only insure that we are adequately taking care of and maintaining what assets we do have, but also to identify our needs and the associated costs, and the news on this front is not good.

The wastewater plant is for the most part in good shape, but as it approaches 10-12 years old, we have not put aside the money for the repairs and updates that are inevitably needed. The bigger issue at the wastewater plant is the issue of capacity. There are currently times where we are running at capacity, so if there is any chance of any growth (whether residential or industrial); we may not be able to meet the need without an expansion of the plant. It is estimated that to give us 25% more capacity, the cost will be \$5.5 million. [There is a better way to gain capacity for our wastewater plant.](#) As it currently stands, the wastewater plant treats 2 to 3 times as much water as the water plant produces. How can this be you ask? Although we do believe that there is some infiltration of ground water into the sewer lines in areas with high water tables, we believe that the largest contributor to this problem is sump pumps that are tied into the sewer lines. City Council will soon have to face these issues. If we want to grow, how do get extra sewer capacity? Do we build additional capacity at a cost of \$5.5 million? Do we have some method of getting sump pumps segregated from our sewer system that doesn't create other problems? And also, how do we plan for the future care of the wastewater plant to avoid another costly rebuild

of the system?

The news for the water plant is worse still. We have ignored this very crucial asset. As I have stated previously, we have replaced some water lines, and we have been able to afford the needed repairs when something at the plant breaks, but that is about it and it is now coming time to pay the piper. Rates have been kept lower, but at what price? The list of work needed at the plant is immense. In addition, we have three wells that provide water to the City, and the oldest well is failing quickly and we can not meet the City's needs with only two wells. Unless we are to bury our heads in the sand and hope the problem goes away, there is little doubt that the rates for water need to increase. Whether these rates increase to help pay for the needed improvements directly or whether they rise to pay off bonds, the end result is the same. Delaying the inevitable only reduces the options. I know that you feel that rates are high enough and I am sure that you can point to towns that have lower rates, but I will also bet that if you look closer, that these towns are also the ones currently facing issues worse than ours, and believe me, there are towns facing worse issues due to their neglect.

We are striving hard to take care of our facilities and to provide you with the best service possible. The asset management plans recently completed will help accomplish this. We have also recently hired a full time maintenance person at the water plant just to take care of the facility. The wastewater plant has had a similar maintenance position for some time now and the benefits are showing.



Police Chief Emphasizes Officer Training

by Mike McConnell, PH.D.

Iowa law requires all peace officers to log a minimum of 24-hours of on-going training every two years. The Webster City Police Department easily exceeds this requirement. In fact, this year each officer has received at least 18-hours of training. We project that in 2009, in-service training will jump to 22-hours per officer, nearly doubling the State requirement. We are becoming quite proactive by ensuring our officers receive the highest level of training that we can obtain.

2008 was a very successful training year for several members of the Webster City Police Department. Chief McConnell completed his Ph.D. in Business Administration/Criminal Justice Administration. Captain Janssen attended the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia which is considered to be the premier training event in a

police officer's career. Senior Police Officer Neal VanderLeest is one class away from completing his Master of Science Degree in Homeland Security. These are all very lofty personal achievements that help bring professionalism to the police department and demonstrate a solid commitment to their profession.

In addition, Chief McConnell is an adjunct professor teaching criminal justice students at Buena Vista University in Fort Dodge. Sergeants Shiloh Mork & Scot Ely and Senior Police Officers Phil Queen & Neal VanderLeest serve as Adjunct Instructors at Iowa Central Community College. Teaching is not only a benefit for those being taught, but it also keeps us on our toes and up-to-date on the latest thoughts and trends in the criminal justice community.

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Some of the training that officers have attended this year were:

- OWI/implied consent
- Iowa Association of Investigators Conference
- Drug Recognition Class, Outlaw Biker Investigations
- 2008 Law updates
- Tactical Warrant Field Training
- Spanish for Law Enforcement
- Asian Gangs & Organized Crime
- FBI Academy
- Inside the mind of a sexual predator
- Law Enforcement Intelligence Network
- Enforcing the Smoke Free Act Training
- Military Leave Training
- ILEA Rifle Re-cert School
- Protecting our Children Seminar

From November 2007 until October 2008, the Webster City Police Department has sent officers to become instructors for the following topics:

- Firearms – Officer Houge (Capt. Janssen was already an instructor)
- TASER – Officer Houge & Officer VanderLeest
- Pepper Spray – Officer Michehl
- ASP-Striking Instruments – Officer Houge
- Handcuffs – Officer Houge (cert. was part of ASP class)
- Flashlight Baton – Officer VanderLeest
- Standardized Field Sobriety (OWI) – Officer Houge
- Defensive Tactics – Sgt. Ely
- Radar / Lidar – Officer Michehl
- DARE – Officer Knutson (Sgt. Wardell is already an instructor)
- Active Shooter – Sgt. Ely
- CPR/First Aid – Sgt. Mork

Looking into 2009, the police officer training committee has approved the following major schools:

- FBI instructor Development School (2 Officers)
- Driving Instructor School (1 Officer)

- Field Training Officer (2 Officers)
- Drug Recognition Expert (1 Officer)
- Crime Scene Officer School (3 Officers)
- Computer Investigation Training (3 Officers)
- Knife Instructor School (1 Officer)
- 2009 Legislative Law Updates (as many officers as possible).

The in-service training slated for the 2009 includes the following:

- Defensive Tactics
- Sleuth / NCIC Training
- D.O.T. Enforcement
- Defensive Flashlight Training
- Drug Recognition (Host Site Training)
- In Custody and Sudden Death Training
- Stop Sticks
- Milo Electronic Range
- 2009 Law Updates
- Active Shooter
- Smoking Enforcement Laws

This year, the training committee discussed increasing the involvement of dispatchers into the in-house training events. It was agreed by all that we would include the dispatchers into the following in-house training.

- Active Shooter
- Missing Persons/Abductions
- Bomb Threat
- Milo Electronic Range
- Fire Extinguisher
- Standardized Field Sobriety Training
- Crime Scene Investigations

Ongoing training is one of the most critical components in a police officer's & dispatchers' career. As you can see, there are many areas of interest that officers & dispatchers can receive training in. We are committed to ensuring that our employees receive the most appropriate training that fits the needs in Webster City.

GRACELAND CEMETERY SPRING CLEANUP REMINDER NOTICE

The City of Webster City would like to remind all persons the Spring cleanup removal will start on April 1 at Graceland and Foster's Baby Addition Cemeteries. It is requested that all flower boxes, wreaths, decorations, and flowers (this includes items in above-ground fixtures-saddles, vases, planters, Shepard hooks) be removed before April 1. If these items are not removed they will be picked up and disposed of by the Cemetery staff.

After April 10 persons will be permitted to place flowers and other decorations on above-ground fixtures (i.e., saddles, vases, planters, Shepard hook type hangings as long as they do not interfere with mowing/trimming). All decorations that will be placed on the ground will not be permitted until nine days prior to Memorial Day. The post Memorial Day removal of flowers (placed on the ground) will begin on June 10.

In addition, the United States' flags placed on the Veteran's graves will be removed at this time. New flags will be placed on Veteran's graves in time to observe Memorial Day.

Please direct any questions to Graceland Cemetery at 832-9125.

Fuller Hall Building Hours

September 29, 2008 – April 25, 2009

Monday – Friday 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Saturday 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Sunday 1:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. (Fitness Rooms & Racquetball Only-Adults)

This year the Fuller Hall Recreation Center has added a new weight room with new equipment. Any person wanting a tour may contact Fuller Hall at 832-9193.



Hamilton County Public Health and Hospice is looking to increase their volunteer base in the community. If you would be interested in being a Hospice Volunteer please contact Christine Hassebrock BSW at 515-832-9565.

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Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs

As the cost of energy (electricity, natural gas, gasoline, etc) continues to climb both nationwide and world wide for that matter, the City of Webster City continues to try and assist its customers in controlling energy usage and therefore energy costs. The City sponsors a variety of programs to conserve water usage and energy usage through its energy rebate program and its efficient lighting programs. Through Webster City's energy efficient lighting program, the City offers to its customers a variety of fluorescent lighting options which includes such options as candelabra lights, globe lights, bug lights, 3-way bulbs, spotlights, and the regular old "twisty" bulbs we are all familiar with. The City buys these bulbs wholesale and offers all of them to its customers at cost with even an occasional "sale" thrown in. Despite all of the information on fluorescent light bulbs available, many people have still not made the transition and this may be because of the bad information still circulating. For my own part, despite the rise in electric costs and the rise in natural gas costs, my average electric bills have gone down and my gas usage has gone down based upon just two changes made in my home. I have switched almost 90% of my light bulbs to fluorescent and I have installed a programmable thermostat. With that said, lets take a look at the fact and fiction surrounding today's fluorescent light bulbs.

FICTION: Compact fluorescent light bulbs cost too much!

FACT: Compact fluorescent bulbs have dropped significantly in price and many are now under \$2.00 each. The worst of the compact fluorescent lights last three times as long as an incandescent light bulb and the better ones last 10 to 15 times as long as an incandescent light bulb. Each fluorescent bulb will save the user about \$30 in electricity over the life of the bulb.

FICTION: Fluorescent bulbs don't turn on right away.

FACT: Some fluorescent bulbs do take a few seconds to achieve their maximum brightness, but they do turn on almost instantly.

FICTION: Fluorescent light bulbs flicker when they first turn on.

FACT: The older bulbs with magnetic ballasts did indeed have this problem. The newer bulbs have electronic ballasts and no longer have this problem.

FICTION: Compact fluorescent bulbs contain mercury and emit mercury as they burn.

FACT: This is false. The tiny bit of mercury in the bulb is sealed in the bulb.

FICTION: Compact fluorescent light bulbs contain large amounts of mercury.

FACT: The amount of mercury in a fluorescent bulb is only a fraction of what is in a common household thermometer.

FICTION: Compact fluorescent bulbs put off a harsh blue light.

FACT: Some fluorescent bulbs do put off a brighter blue light, but newer bulbs can also be purchased that have the softer yellowish light. If this is the lighting effect you would like, look for bulbs with a label that says they are "warm" or "soft."



City of Webster City

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TODAY'S ENERGY SAVING SUGGESTION:

Programmable thermostats can save the average consumer about \$200 a year in heating costs. These thermostats can be pre programmed to lower temperatures at night after you have gone to bed and during the day while no one is at home. They can also be programmed to raise the temperature by the time you get out of bed or get home from work so the home or office is at a comfortable temperature when needed. These thermostats are usually on a seven day system, so that they can be programmed differently for days when the schedules of you and your family are different. Mine was installed in about 20 minutes (even with reading the instructions which I know is atypical for me) with just a screwdriver.

Webster City Needs Your Voice

This is your community.

Please let us know if you have suggestions or changes that need to be made.

My name is _____
Address _____

Phone _____

Clip and mail to:
CITY SCENE COMMENTS
P.O. Box 217
Webster City, IA 50595

For all valid comments, signatures are required.

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