

Matthew Schooley, City Manager, called the 2020 Leadership Planning Session of the Alma City Commission to order at 8:07 a.m. at the Alma Public Library.

Commissioners present: Mapes, Mott, Harrington, Stahl, Allman, and Piccolo.

Commissioners absent: Pitts.

Also present: Lorrie Taylor, Jim Wheeler, Brett Baublitz, Kathy Phillips, Jacob Gulick, Aaron Hale, Aeric Ripley, David Ringle, John Tanner, Greg Marker, Lou Fleury, and Rhonda Rohr.

City Manager Schooley opened the meeting with an explanation of the purpose of the meeting: to establish a list of goals and priorities to continue to make Alma a better place to live and work.

Schooley went on to say that one of the biggest issues facing cities now is lead and copper contamination and the "Lead-Copper Rule". A team from OHM was present for the meeting to explain the challenges involved.

David Ringle, Public Services Director, introduced the team from OHM: John Tanner, Greg Marker, and Lou Fleury. Ringle said he had been attending sessions about the new mandates regarding lead contamination. The reality is there will be a big impact on local governments, but the public's health and welfare are a priority. Corrections to the problems have been delegated to local municipalities, but no additional funding has been provided.

Greg Marker spoke about the rule and what the immediate future holds. He explained he has been watching this rule since its inception. The Lead-Copper Rule sets new standards for municipality owned lines as well as privately owned service leads from the curb stop to the house. A desktop preliminary inventory of lead service lines within the City was due by January 1, 2020, using existing information. In-home water sampling and resident notifications are included as requirements under the new rule. By January 1, 2021, municipalities are required to begin inventorying lead service lines. Verified inventory of lead service lines is due by January 1, 2025. Once lines have been verified, they must be replaced at a rate of 5% per year.

Water sampling consists of five separate liters of water drawn from a home. The first liter is indicative of the makeup of the service line. The fifth liter is used to determine what is in the home's plumbing lines. City staff will likely have to perform all of the testing to get true samples.

A coalition of 49 communities set out to fight the rule, but a declaratory judgment denied the claim in October of 2018. Major issues include:

- Public monies used for private replacement
- Replacement timeline
- Lead action level not based on science
- MDEQ underestimated cost in regulatory impact statement (MDEQ estimates \$500 million, but industry estimates \$2.5 billion)

One of the issues is increasing fees and identifying other potential funding sources. Temporary easements/permission to enter property must be considered as well as what recourse the City will have if a property owner denies access.

While costs are estimated to be anywhere from \$3500 to \$5500 per line, they could easily soar to \$15,000 or more if a porch or difficult landscaping is involved. Partial replacements are not allowed under the Rule.

Marker called for questions, and discussion followed about possible ways to handle denied access, and what would happen if the City failed to follow the Rule. Marker said the state could pull the City's permit to provide water to citizens, and Ringle noted Water Plant staff would likely lose licenses for failure to comply. Other questions included how to stop a resident from selling a house after denying access, and could the cost be amortized over of a period of years.

Ringle estimates anywhere from 370 to 2500 replacements may be required. We have accurate data back to the year 2000, but no data is available about private lines, so "pot-holing" will be necessary to test lines for content. Marker said at a 5% replacement rate, the costs would be approximately \$250,000 per year based on conservative estimates. Assistant City Manager, Aeric Ripley, noted costs could be much higher if there is a lack of available contractors. Mayor Greg Mapes suggested a \$10.00 surcharge on water bills to raise \$250,000 a year. Marker explained the \$250,000 is only an estimate and doesn't cover the costs of sampling.

Mapes asked if the mains are safe. Marker said the mains are safe. Joints could be an issue but pose very little risk as the surface area exposed is minimal compared with service lines. Additional discussion followed about the City's liability for replacing private property and documentation of changes. Schooley said the goal is good communication with property owners and ultimately, doing what's best for the health and safety of City residents.

Discussion followed about the origin of the rule, water sampling, and how other communities are approaching the new regulations.

The group recessed for a brief break at 9:15 a.m. and reconvened at 9:30 a.m.

John Tanner of OHM explained the proposed and potential construction and improvements to the Waste Water Treatment Plant and to the sanitary sewer collection system. Inventory has been completed and mapped as part of the SAW Grant. The majority of the system is old, but in relatively good shape for its age. The Plan will be used to assess risk of failure, and prepare a capital improvement plan, or a plan for replacement. The study offered three different scenarios for improvements. Ringle noted some improvements will be necessary in the next five years to keep up with the changing makeup of the product coming into the plant. Mapes asked about raising rates to build a fund that could be used for improvements. Kathy Phillips, Finance Director, said that is under consideration already. Ringle said this Plan is the culmination of a five year SAW Grant process.