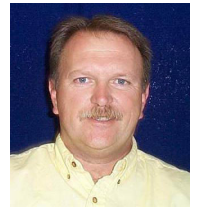


Water Utilities: A perpetual existence



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Webster's Dictionary defines the word, perpetual, as continuing forever; everlasting; valid for all time; occurring continually. This word (perpetual) accurately describes your water utility. It probably started with the congregation of population in your area in the 1800's with the formation of villages or towns. The need to bring fresh water in and wastewater out will always exist. Although some of these early systems were crude, some were engineering marvels and still exist today. With the arrival of iron pipe around the turn of the century, these systems started becoming, well, perpetual. The pipe at times has to be replaced, the pumps repaired, the storage facilities rebuilt, repaired, or replaced. But the system as a whole endures the test of time. Customers come and customers go, sometimes this is a reflection of the good economic times as opposed to the arrival of bad economic times. Sometimes the village or town is just a mere shadow of it's former self, but still, the water must be delivered and the wastewater taken away. It is during these hard financial times, when the customer base is depleted or unable to bear the cost of maintenance and up-grades that the perpetual existence really comes into question. I am not saying it does not happen, surely there are systems that have been shut down and abandoned, but for the most part, as far as municipal systems go, they endure.

We are but stewards of these systems during our time here. Whether as an employee or operator, your stewardship may be as long as thirty (30) or forty (40) years and may be as a board member or decision maker 2, 4, 6, or 8 years. In either capacity, you will undoubtedly have difficult decisions to make regarding the perpetual existence of this critical infrastructure. Life, as we know it, cannot exist and survive without water! So we are left with the hard decisions to maintain and operate this vital infrastructure, even during these challenging and difficult economic times. It is sometimes necessary to incur unreasonable debt today to ensure the viability of these systems for tomorrow. It is your, mine, and our, responsibility to make the right decisions both financially and operationally, to ensure that the water will flow in and the wastewater out.

By following a few simple rules of the road you can ensure that your financial decisions regarding infrastructure projects are sound ones.

- Do call USDA-Rural Utilities Service and the New

York State Environmental Facilities Corporation for financial advice.

- Do advertise for a Request for Proposals (RFP) to several Engineering Consultants before choosing the best firm for the job.
- Do check and re-check references from the consultants that respond to your RFP.
- Do not hire on the basis of long standing relationships with Engineering Consultants. (Make them compete for the job!)
- Do include your operators and employees in the decision making process.
- Do not dismiss, disregard, or delay your infrastructure project because you feel your customers, constituents, or citizens cannot afford the proposed project! The funding agencies will determine if your project meets certain affordability criteria. If they feel the project is not affordable to your community, they will not lend you the money.
- Do always consider a scaled down project if the proposed project is not affordable.

Please remember that you are only the stewards of a water or wastewater system that will, in reality, be in existence for many lifetimes. The system is only yours for a short time. Honor the decisions made in the past, make good decisions in the present, and leave the system well prepared for the future.

Make your legacy, "Quality on Tap" for the next guardians of your "Perpetual System"! 💧