



City of Mackinac Island

Department of Public Works 7358 Market Street, Mackinac Island, MI 49757

PO Box 515

Dear Commissioners,

Last month, you asked me to elaborate on my comments regarding the upcoming end of the REU system as it relates to future development on Mackinac. I apologize for not being able to attend in person, as usual, to answer your questions more directly.

Since June of 2004 a City Council-enacted building moratorium has been in place due to the dwindling capacity of our wastewater treatment facility. As a result, the REU system was formed. Limits were placed on the number of REUs sold each year with the goal of extending the life of the existing plant and allowing us time to build a new facility. That was a six-year plan. Now, 20 years later, we find ourselves finally at the end of the REU system with a new plant under construction. The entire reason for the 2004 building moratorium will soon be gone.

Due to the moratorium and REU system, the Department of Public Works was placed in the unusual (and, very possibly, unique) position of pacing growth on the Island. With the end of the moratorium, that will no longer be the case. The DPW will no longer, in any way, limit or pace development in the City. Instead, the DPW will return to its traditional role under which its focus will be the provision of the water and sewer infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of the community. Connection fees will be charged for tapping into the water and sewer systems, but there will be no rationing. Very simply, growth management will no longer be the role of Public Works.

The DPW responds to the utility needs of the community as reflected in the plans and policies established in the Master Plan and the Zoning Code and implemented by the Planning Commission. In fact, the capacity of the new wastewater treatment plant is based directly on the growth potential reflected in the current city Master Plan. We are not, and should not be, the regulatory body shaping City growth and development. We do not exist to limit, shape, or pace growth, nor is that my role, in any way under normal circumstances, as Director.

Growth has been limited, to some degree, by the sale of REUs. To what degree, I do not know. Furthermore, I do not know what to expect as we move to this new era. I do not have any suggestions to limit future growth, or even if that is appropriate. I simply want to point out the end of the moratorium is approaching and that the current limiting factor of growth will not exist anymore.

In April, I shared the article linked below with Commissioner Myers. I find it an interesting point of view, and one worthy of consideration. However, I am not in any way an expert on City growth and planning. I leave that to the appointed and elected bodies who are directly responsible for those considerations.

<https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2019/1/9/growth-and-the-fallacy-of-control>

With respect,

Allen Burt
Director of Public Works