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# Stoddard County Commission Meeting - Monday, April 21, 2025 - Discuss Increase in Sewer Rates

APRIL 21ST 2025 BY DEE LOFLIN

Stoddard County Commission Meeting - Monday, April 21, 2025 - Discuss Increase in Sewer Rates

The Stoddard County Commission opened their meeting with a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **Katelyn Lambert, Bootheel Regional Planning Commission**

New Lisbon has finished up their storm damage and this will finish up their gravel money under the ARPA approved monies from the Commissioner. Their final request is \$5,680.56

Motion to approve the payment to New Lisbon in the amount of \$5,680.56 from ARPA funds already approved by the Commission made by Commissioner C.D. Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Wes Howard. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Advance does have their first invoice and they are moving along and will be requesting about \$150,000 of ARPA funds.

Bloomfield City did received CDBG funds. Environmental study should be done this week and they will move ahead on their sewer project.

April 30th an annual report is due.

Mathis had a question about the interest on the ARPA monies. As of 2024 all monies were to be allocated and then spent by the end of the 2026. "Can we move that interest

into another account since we have allocated all of the ARPA monies?" The answer was yes.

### **New Business:**

Kenny LaRue, Concerned Citizen contacted Presiding Commissioner Greg Mathis about sewer rate increase. Mathis had a copy of his bill for the meeting.

Concerned citizen, Jimmy Commstock, also attended today's Commission meeting in regards to the increase in sewer rates.

Both live in the Western Heights/Ecology Acres area of Liberty Township.

Mathis stated that Liberty Utilities is who increased the rates so the first phone call he made was to them. "Bailey" with Liberty Utilities in Joplin, Missouri answered his call.

The question to her was, "There was a rate increase in Stoddard County specifically for the Western Heights/Ecology Acres from estimated \$24 per month to \$93 per month. The customers of those areas state they did not receive any communication, not a letter, nothing to notify them of the rate increase on March 1st. How did Liberty Utilities contact each of their members?"

She said there was information on the bills, information on the website and several virtual meetings as well as in person meetings across Missouri for people to attend.

Commissioner Mathis asked what date did this request to increase the rates go through the Missouri Public Service Commission. She stated on January 23rd and February 18th.

"They charge by the gallon and I don't have a meter on my sewer, so how do they charge?" asked Comstock. Apparently they go by pipe size and do not meter the water outflow.

She also stated that there were virtual and public meetings held on September 16, 17, 19, 24, 25, 26, and 27th of 2024.

Commissioner Mathis then called the Missouri Public Service Commission and spoke to Justin. He stated it was up to Liberty Utilities to notify their customers of any rate changes.

The closest location of a public hearing was in Cape Girardeau on September 27, 2024 at 7 p.m.

**Andy Holden, Stoddard County Sheriff's Department**

"I have been seeing this for a while. It's some type of program called the Missouri Blue Shield and it is for cities and counties throughout Missouri," stated Holden. "I am wondering if you as the Commission would sign a proclamation so the county sheriff's department could belong to the Missouri Blue Shield Program.

There were several questions as to what the program was about. Holden had a one page hand-out for the Commission to review and will put on the Agenda for next week.

### **Beau Bishop, EMA Director**

Bishop went over the recent storms and updated the Commission on the SEMA and FEMA declarations on storm damage.

March 14th storm is still under FEMA review.

March 30th - April 8th is still under SEMA review.

There was 1 major, 2 minor, and 2 affected areas the numbers SEMA came up with while doing damage review for individual assistance. FEMA and SEMA will return to review the area for the public assistance, for example roads, culverts, erosion damage, bridges etc.

"Keep us posted on how things go," stated Mathis. "How many people from SEMA or FEMA come to review the area?" Bishop answered that there are different numbers of people due to their expertise. Could be 5 or 6 or less, just depends on environmental expertise or road/bridge inspections.

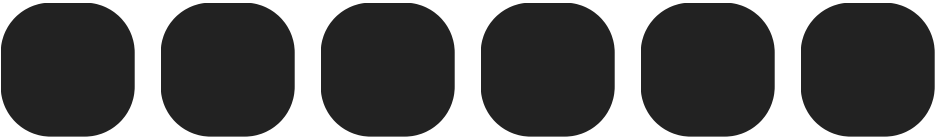
### **Other Business:**

There will be a 6 pm Stoddard County Commission meeting will meet with the SB40 Board and the Sheltered Workshop Board.

Motion to accept the April 14, 2025 regular meeting minutes made by Commissioner Wes Howard, seconded by Commissioner C.D. Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Motion to enter into closed session at 11:03 a.m. made by Commissioner C.D. Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Wes Howard. All three voted yes and motion passed.

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