

We could have \$100 water bills!

Some things never change. This is going to sound familiar because it is. We've been making these same points for years now.

The Buckeye Lake water saga is one bad sequel after another. I think we're now up to *Build Our Water Treatment Plant Part IV*, or maybe it's even *Part V*. It's the blob that won't die.

The script really doesn't change much. First, village officials tell us how hard they are working to get public water. Then comes the 'but,' as in 'but we need another' study, report, survey etc. That takes us to the obligatory feeding the cash monsters (aka consultants and attorneys) in the basement scene. Those monsters are now getting close to goggling up a million of your dollars.

The studies, reports or whatever are always inconclusive – we still need more information or we need to do more design work. The monsters are still hungry.

Somehow we never get around to answering the critical, but inexpensive questions. For example, we've been pounding on this one for years – will Ohio EPA allow our well field to be in a floodplain – 'yes, maybe or no.' If the answer is 'maybe,' what is the cost to turn it into 'yes.' It doesn't cost much to formally seek an answer from Ohio EPA. If it's 'maybe,' they will be quite happy to tell us specifically what must be done to make it 'yes.' For years, we've known that our floodplain well field is a critical issue, yet for some reason we haven't taken the obvious step and asked for an Ohio EPA determination.

Maybe deep down village officials suspect the answer will be 'no' or it will cost too much to get a 'yes.' That should finally kill the blob. When the blob dies, so does the ongoing fantasy of total control and the regular feedings of the cash monsters.

Each sequel includes a PG-13 flirtation scene where village officials play footsy with a potential partner – Hebron, Licking County and Millersport. Sometimes it doesn't get beyond the first date, like with Hebron. Other times, we tell them we'll call, but it takes years to get that next call. Think Millersport. For our potential partners, it's been like dating a 40-year-old with major commitment issues who still lives at home with Mom. They just can't give up Mama.

Village council is poised to start *Part IV* or *Part V* Monday night. The plan this time is to throw \$25,000 to the cash monsters to rework our floodplain test wells. It is being touted as the REQUIRED next step. As Ohio EPA recently confirmed, it is only REQUIRED if we continue the fantasy of building our own plant.

Last Wednesday, council members had a special meeting with one of the cash monsters. A spreadsheet distributed at the meeting purported to show that building our own plant is the least expensive option – \$46.35 per month versus \$55.15 per month buying water from Millersport and \$58.23 to \$65.83 a month buying water from Hebron.

This report is worthless. For starters, it assumes a highly optimistic 1,000 customers for each option. More realistic estimates are for 600-750 customers. Of course, fewer customers mean much higher monthly bills.

But that's not the most alarming discrepancy. Each option lists a total project cost and a total annual OMR (operations, maintenance and repair) cost. OMR is listed at \$125,000 a year for all three Hebron options. That's what the consultant estimates it will cost to operate our own distribution system. That cost increases to \$145,000 a year for the Millersport option, with the extra \$20,000 perhaps covering the operation of a pump station. But here's the kicker. The OMR cost to operate a distribution system AND water treatment plant is listed as \$200,000. That means the estimated annual OMR cost to operate a multi-million dollar water treatment plant is \$75,000 – total cost of \$200,000 less the \$125,000 OMR cost to operate the distribution system.

We wouldn't even try to pass that off in one of our April Fool's Day stories. It's ridiculous; no one would believe it. The cost of just one (and more than one will be required) certified plant operator will be about \$75,000. That leaves basically zip for the second operator, all the treatment chemicals, electricity to operate the plant, gas to heat the plant, insurance, required water testing, plant repair and maintenance and so on. It is impossible to operate a water treatment plant for \$75,000 a year. The real figure is probably \$200,000 to \$250,000, or more.

So let's take the low end of the range, \$200,000, and add the \$125,000 cost to operate the distribution system (system repairs, billing, meter reading, customer service and bad debt). That quickly jumps the estimated monthly bill from \$46.35 to \$56.77 which still isn't realistic because it is based on 1,000 customers. If we cut the number of customers to a more realistic 600, the monthly bill takes a huge jump from \$56.77 to \$94.62. Yes, that's **\$94.62 per month**. That's scarier than anything you'll see this Halloween. If the cost to operate the plant is more than \$200,000 a year, your monthly water bill will be over \$100.

With our own treatment plant, we pay for everything – cost overruns, unexpected repairs, bad debt, consultants etc. It's all on our bill. We don't share it with anyone.

It's time to pull the plug on the blob and cash monsters. Tell your council members this weekend that enough is enough. It is ridiculous to pour another \$25,000 down a fantasy rat hole. Tell them to work out a deal with Millersport or Hebron. That doesn't require spending another \$25,000 and will put the cash monsters on a strict diet.



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Three donors left off of The Queen II thank you list

Editor:

Whenever you thank people publicly you take the risk of leaving someone out. Well, that's what happened last week when I was recounting the Queen of the Lake II donors to Charlie Prince – not once, not twice, but three times. I've got so much egg on my face, we could make an omelet and feed the BLASST crowd next summer. I must have gone brain dead for a few moments.

First, I left out Bill Ours and Ours Garage and Wrecker Service. Without Bill and his staff, our new Queen would still be at Salt Fork Lake. It's not a small matter to haul a huge pontoon boat on the highway. Permits and special equipment are required.

Second, The Queen would be still sitting on a trailer if Dave Levacy and the crew at Buckeye Lake Marina hadn't put her in the water for us. Dave also provided a place to store the Queen while we were fixing her up. He is also going to take her out for the

winter and store her.

Third, we must thank the crew at Buckeye Lake Hardware and Majestic Paint for the Queen's spiffy new look. We needed more than elbow grease and Tom Siefert answered our call.

I'm embarrassed by these omissions, but I'm not going to take the easy way out the next time and just issue generic 'thank you's.' Of course, you can't leave anyone out that way, but I believe it's important to specifically thank our benefactors by name. Thankfully, our Buckeye Lake community is blessed with a number of incredibly generous individuals and businesses. They deserve to be thanked individually. Thank you, Bill, Dave and Tom! We couldn't have done it without you.

J-me Bogden, Director

Greater Buckeye Lake Historical Society

Solid waste district thanked

Editor:

The Walnut Township Park Board would like to thank the Coshocton-Fairfield-Licking-Perry Solid Waste District for the grant money that made it possible to purchase rubber mulch to be placed under all of our play equipment at our

township parks. Our parks are: Huffman Park, Runkle Park, New Salem Park and Fairfield Beach Park. This rubber mulch improves the safety of our play equipment and protects our children. Thank you!

Tim Morris

Walnut Township Park Board

Election Letters Just three issues left

Your letters about lake-area candidates and issues on the Nov. 6 ballot are welcome. However, due to the volume of letters we expect to receive, we are strictly enforcing our normally suggested 250-word limit for election letters next week. **Election letters longer than 250 words WILL BE CUT.**

Letters must be original. Those addressed or copied to other publications or appering there will NOT be published.

Letters about the Nov. 6 election will be published through our Oct. 27 issue. Election letters will NOT be published in our Nov. 3 issue. However, candidates criticized in an Oct. 27 letter may respond specifically to that criticism in our Nov. 3 issue.

Your letters may be emailed to charlesprince@buckeyelakebeacon.net, faxed to (740) 928-7960, mailed to PO Box 1542, Buckeye Lake, OH 43008, or dropped off at our Blue Heron Boardwalk office. All letters must be signed and include an address (only community names will be published) and a daytime phone number (phone numbers will not be published).