



Larsmont Area Community Plan



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I. Summary Community Vision Process and Recommendations

Visioning Process

This document summarizes the meetings that were held in June and July of 2005 and those held in the fall of 2005 funded by a Minnesota Lake Superior Coastal Program Grant. The two meetings held in June and July can be seen as more general scoping meetings that allowed residents to identify the overarching issues and helped structure the meetings held in the fall. The fall meetings were structured around three themes that included wastewater management, land use and local governance. A final wrap up meeting presenting the document to the community was held February 6th. At this final meeting citizens broke out into the three issue areas. They discussed and refined the recommendations and formed three committees to continue working on the issues and action items identified in the plan. The meeting schedule summary below gives an overview of the topics covered and presenters.

Meeting Date	Topic Covered	Speaker
June 20 th	Issue identification/community vision	
July 11 th	Setting priorities/identifying action steps	
September 19 th	Mn Extension Small Community Wastewater Planning presentation	Valerie Prax, Mn Extension, Community Wastewater Educator
October 5 th	Land use	Matt Huddleston, Lake County Planning Director
October 17 th	Wastewater	Julie O'Leary, MEP, presenting three differing stakeholder viewpoints on wastewater issues
November 28 th	Local Governance	Jim Fisher, St. Louis County Association of Townships, Wendy Langanki and John Lind, Silver Creek Township
February 6 th	Wrap up Meeting	

The Larsmont community visioning process was structured in such a way as to give residents an opportunity to receive information pertinent to community visioning issues. This then allowed residents to have a discussion about the desired direction the community could take and to identify areas that need additional discussion to reach consensus on an issue.

Approximately 60-70 Larsmont Area community members participated in the meetings, with an average of 30-35 participants per meeting for the meetings in the summer and early fall and around 20 participants in November. For the October 15th meeting a mailing was sent out to approximately 600 area property owners in an effort to engage as many residents as possible. Throughout the meetings an e-mail contact list was compiled. This list was used as a cost effective way to distribute meeting notes and announcements. In addition, all the meetings were advertised in the Lake County News Chronicle.

Based on the community discussions recommendations have been formulated around three themes; land use, wastewater and local governance. For each theme area it is recommended that a sub-committee of residents is formed to continue working on the issue and report back to the community at large in an effort to help the community refine and move forward towards its vision. A more detailed account of the visioning process follows this recommendation summary section.

Recommendations

1. Growth and Development:

The community visioning process made it clear that the community members have a desire to maintain the existing community character and would like to see the implementation of development standards and land use controls that can direct future growth in a way that maintains the character. Further, residents would like to see increased control over decisions that impact the community and would like to see adequate infrastructure in place to accommodate the changing needs of the area. The table below summarizes key recommendations residents could work on. The table also identifies stakeholders and specifies the roles they would play in implementing the recommendation.

Recommendation	Stakeholders	Roles
Participate in planning efforts impacting the Larsmont area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larsmont residents • Larsmont planning sub-committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a sub-committee of Larsmont residents that monitors county and other planning entities such as the North Shore Management Board activities and, where appropriate, advocate for Larsmont residents.
Engage the broader community, including Knife River and residents across the freeway, that are within the congressional township boundary in a discussion on land use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents within congressional township boundary for area between Knife River and Two Harbors and including residents living above Highway 61 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage residents within the congressional township boundary in a discussion on land use and growth and development issues. • Invite the county to help residents understand what is currently in place for land use and start a discussion about whether residents would like to see changes.
Work with the county to develop a Larsmont Area Land Use Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larsmont residents/ residents within Congressional Township Area. • Lake Superior Coastal Program • County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County is the administrative entity responsible for developing a land use plan and incorporating the plan recommendations in its land use ordinance. • Larsmont residents will need to participate and give direction to a plan that guides future land use for the area. • The Lake Superior Coastal program could be a funding source for the development of such a plan.
Work with the county to review and update land use regulatory framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larsmont residents • Lake Superior Coastal Program • County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the development of an area plan, Larsmont residents and the county will need to work together on updating the land use regulatory framework to reflect the community land use vision. • The Lake Superior Coastal Program could be a potential funder of such an ordinance update.

2. Wastewater needs

From the wastewater discussions it is evident that there are differing opinions among community members about information presented on the wastewater issue. Areas where there is little or no agreement when property owners are discussing this issue area include:

- The extent and severity of on-site treatment system failure rates in the Larsmont area and whether an adequate assessment of septic systems has been completed.
- The estimated costs for connections and long term service rates are questioned. It is unclear what assumptions have been used to arrive at the numbers and whether these assumptions remain valid based on increased construction costs and a better understanding of the actual cost of constructing a line along the North Shore since the 2003 estimate was completed.
- Connection requirements are unclear. That is, (when) will residents with properly functioning septic systems be required to connect once the line is constructed?
- There is disagreement on whether a decentralized option has been properly evaluated.
- There is concern that in order to pay for a sewer line there will be pressure to increase development densities.

Recommendation	Stakeholders	Roles
<p>Improve community consensus on the information used to justify wastewater planning decisions as well as the implications for property owners (cost, connection requirements etc.) through hosting a series of informational forums with an independent moderator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larsmont residents • County • KRLSD • WLSSD • MPCA • Contractors (engineering, financial, soils, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wastewater sub-committee can organize a depository of agreed upon information. • Representatives of the identified stakeholder groups will function as sources of information relevant to the wastewater planning process • Extension could function as an independent moderator.
<p>Engage Mn-Extension Service in moderating further discussions, evaluating information collected through these information sessions, and further discuss wastewater options for the Larsmont Area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larsmont residents • KRLSD • WLSSD\ • County • Mn-Extension, small communities wastewater program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wastewater sub-committee with technical assistance from extension could engage Larsmont Area residents and the other stakeholders in a structured discussion on wastewater solutions considering both centralized and decentralized option. • This discussion could include a re-assessment of the boundaries of the area that should be included in a community wastewater discussion. • This committee could work with the partners on identifying funding for further data collection, planning and implementation.

3. Governance

The governance issue focuses on increased communications with the County, KRLSD and Knife River on issues impacting the Larsmont area. This concern is mostly a result of a feeling by many residents that their interests currently are not properly represented. The County carries responsibility for land use decisions and the KRLSD is the entity that governs wastewater needs. In order to gain increased influence over decisions impacting Larsmont residents have two options. One is to strengthen the relationship Larsmont has with the regulatory entities that make land use and wastewater issues for the area. Another route could be the formation of a township, which would allow the Larsmont area to assume a broad variety of responsibilities.

Through this visioning process residents discussed some of their concerns and received some information regarding township government. This can form a basis for further community discussion. Residents participating in the local governance discussion at the final meeting recognized that the formation of a township is likely to be a divisive and lengthy process and could detract from the community’s desire to establish and implement a land use vision and realize a viable wastewater solution for the area. Residents at the final meeting indicated a preference for focusing first on improving communication with the county board and KRLSD.

The community’s preference is to first find ways to improve communications in the community around issues relating to neighborhood and land use planning and second to find ways to improve communications in both directions between residents and the County Board, KRLSD, and Knife River. Residents prefer to first look into alternative community structures such as a Lake Association as a vehicle to establish a more formal representation of the Larsmont Community. The community can keep the option of township formation open, but much more information and community discussion is needed. For this reason the recommendations are set up in two parts. The first part focuses on enhancing communications, and the second part addresses considerations regarding the formation of a township government.

Short term actions

Recommendation	Stakeholders	Roles
Establish a communications committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larsmont residents • County • KRLSD • Knife River 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee would look at ways to improve communications in both directions between citizens and the county board, KRLSD board, and Knife River community • Look at improving communications around issues relating to neighborhood and land-use planning
Research alternative community structures to township government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larsmont residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information about how other seasonal communities communicate and make decisions • Evaluate models offered by neighborhood and lake associations as models for Larsmont

Long term option

Recommendation	Stakeholders	Roles
Establish a Township governance sub-committee to gather and organize information on township government and engage Larsmont/Knife River Area residents in a dialogue on township government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Larsmont/Knife River Area residents• Mn Township Association• County	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The sub-committee would serve as a liaison between the various stakeholders and the citizens.• The Mn Township Association can offer technical assistance and assist in presenting information to area residents as part of a community dialogue.• The county plays a critical role as the entity that has to set the election process if a township is to be formed.

II. Background Larsmont Area community visioning process

The Larsmont area has been defined in a number of ways by community members. For the purpose of this document the area's boundaries are Knife River to the west and Two Harbors to the east and about six miles (which would correspond with a congressional Township boundary) from the shore of Lake Superior land inward. A portion of this study area, the strip of land between the shore and the Highway 61 Freeway, is included in the Knife River Larsmont Sanitary District (KRLSD). KRLSD has been working over the last ten years to obtain funding for the construction of a pipeline serving the section of Larsmont included within this area. This area below Hwy 61 is known as the "Larsmont planning area".

Over the past few years, tensions have mounted in Larsmont with increased development pressures and wastewater management issues. A recent voluntary survey, supported by a Lake Superior Coastal Program grant, found that there were problems with some of the individual septic systems in Larsmont. A pipeline has been proposed as a solution to addressing wastewater concerns for the area located between Lake Superior and the Highway 61 freeway.

As the sanitary district has been working on getting funding in place, some area residents have brought up concerns relating to cost and land use implications if the construction of a sanitary sewer line proceeds. In addition, in order for the project to move forward the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD), which would be responsible for treating wastewater from such a pipeline, would have to extend its current service boundaries to include the Larsmont Area. WLSSD has specified conditions to the KRLSD under which it would consider accepting wastewater from the Larsmont Planning Area.

Larsmont is presently an unincorporated area. In June 2005, some residents began to discuss concerns about recent developments and the proposed pipeline. They decided to hold a public meeting on June 20th to survey Larsmont residents and to hold a community discussion to gauge interest in the development of a community vision. The Larsmont Community Club, which serves as an informal community convener and social gathering place, agreed to allow its mailing list to be used to contact residents for the meeting. In addition to the members of the Larsmont Community Club, invitations were also mailed to all the members on the KRLSD e-mail list, and a notice was put in the Lake County News Chronicle.

Residents of the Larsmont Community approached Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP) to assist in the facilitation of the community visioning process. MEP is a statewide coalition of 90 groups that have joined together to advance policies that will protect and restore Minnesota's waters. MEP provides education, organizing and outreach efforts with the goal of building support policies that protect water quality. In 2002, MEP established an office in Duluth to better serve northeastern Minnesota and to work on Great Lakes issues. In June, 2003, MEP facilitated the creation of the North Shore Watershed Watch (NSWW), whose mission is to be "a coalition of people and

organizations acting to restore, maintain, and enhance the Minnesota North Shore watershed's unique character and integrity in the face of the growing pressures of development.”

The NSWW meets monthly and has been supporting Larsmont residents in their efforts to plan for a sustainable future since January, 2005. As a result of this, MEP helped to facilitate the first Larsmont community meeting on June 20th to keep the meetings objective and focused. At that meeting, Larsmont residents overwhelmingly expressed a desire to have their community remain “as it is” and to continue to dialogue about goals for their future. They also identified a need to share this dialogue with county elected officials and KRLSD. At the community's request, MEP submitted a grant application to the Minnesota Lake Superior Coastal program to facilitate a community visioning process and to develop an action plan to continue a community dialogue regarding the future of the Larsmont Area. This grant was awarded in August of 2005. MEP contracted with the Community Growth Institute, a planning firm specializing in rural planning, to assist in the facilitation of the community visioning process.

III. Community Vision Process and Results

Issue Identification

This section summarizes the community visioning discussion that took place over the course of the planning process. This discussion will be structured around three major themes that are inter-related. The themes are Land Use, Wastewater Management and Local Governance. These three themes emerged from the June 20th meeting and July 11th meetings. At these meetings the participants had an opportunity to identify and prioritize issues and assign overall priority between the three themes. The themes and weights given to specific issues within each themes by the residents who voted are listed below:

1. Growth and Development Concerns (46):

- a. Impact of new development on community character (13)
- b. Resort/condo/timeshare development (11)
- c. Address type of commercial services desirable for community (8)
- d. Development density (7)
- e. Increased property values (3)
- f. Community wastewater needs (2)
- g. Impact of development on drinking water quality and supply (1)
- h. Increased traffic (1)

2. Local control/influence over community issues (44):

- a. Control over land use issues/planning and zoning (18)
- b. Community input on county decisions (15)
- c. Consider creating a Township (11)
- d. Increased property values - changing economics of use of property as a result of this (1)
- e. Lack of involvement from community members

3. Community Wastewater needs (38):

- a. Need to address failing septic systems to protect water resource/environment (13)
- b. Protect water quality/Lake Superior (12)
- c. Address community wastewater needs (6)
- d. Impacts of pipeline on development (5)
- e. Affordability (2)

These themes were carried over into the follow up meetings held in the fall of 2005. Each theme will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

1. Growth and Development:

This theme builds on the initial issues and vision themes identified during the summer meetings. At the beginning of the meeting Matt Huddleston, Lake County Planning Director, gave an overview of current zoning for the Larsmont area. He also discussed the update the County has been working on for its Planned Unit Development regulations. The audience had an opportunity to ask questions regarding land use issues.

Listed below are the vision themes that were agreed upon regarding growth and development issues following the October meetings. As is evident from the vision statements, the three themes of growth and development, wastewater issues and local governance are intertwined. It should further be noted these statements are broad and that the community would need to further discuss how they define items such as the “Larsmont character” and “adequate infrastructure”. A full listing of the statements generated can be found in the October 5th meeting notes located in the Appendix.

Growth and Development Vision Statements:

1. Maintain existing community character which includes: remaining rural and residential with a mix of small scale (family owned) businesses.
2. Implement development standards and controls that can direct future growth in a way that maintains the Larsmont Character.
3. Increase community influence over decisions that impact the Larsmont Community.
4. Have adequate infrastructure in place to accommodate changing needs of the area.
Note: Some residents indicated that “it all depends on what is meant by adequate infrastructure”.
5. Protect Larsmont’s environmental qualities.

Opportunities and Challenges:

In order to act on the vision the community has to have an understanding of the opportunities and challenges they face. Opportunities can be leveraged to help the community move forward, while the challenges will need to be overcome to reach the community's vision. A complete listing of the opportunities and challenges can be found in the October 5th meeting notes located in the Appendix.

Some common themes emerged from this discussion. These themes could be described as both challenges and opportunities:

- The area will likely continue to experience growth pressure in the foreseeable future.
- The community will need to reach consensus, get a plan in place and follow through.
- The community members need to be kept involved.
- The community needs to establish a working relationship with the county to address the Larsmont area needs.
- There is a need to define the Larsmont area and find ways to effectively represent the needs of the residents.

Action Steps:

An overall guiding principle in continuation of discussions relating to growth and development issues is the recognition that the Larsmont community at large should have an opportunity to actively participate in discussions. Smaller groups could research various issues within the growth and development category and present recommendations back to the Larsmont community at large. A key challenge at this point is that because Larsmont is unincorporated, residents could question the legitimacy of workgroup recommendations representing the community at large. It is therefore important the community has a process in place that can establish community consensus in the absence of a formal elected body representing the Larsmont residents.

The following themes emerged from the actions identified by the meeting participants at the June 20th and October 5th meetings relating to Growth and Development issues. A more detailed discussion can be found in the Appendix.

- Develop a plan and vision for the community
- Address community concerns through zoning, such as limiting certain uses and regulating densities
- Participate in other planning efforts (county level, North Shore Management Board and State of the Coast meetings)
- Communicate with the County Board

2. Community Wastewater:

How to provide for community wastewater needs is a key area of tension among community members. Some of the residents see a sewer line as a long term solution to addressing failing septic systems in the Larsmont area. At the other end of the spectrum are residents that think the pipeline will be too expensive and will increase development pressure for more density to support the cost of constructing and operating the line. These residents would like to see a decentralized wastewater solution to address the failing systems in the area.

Both residents and developers are in a holding pattern because they do not want to replace a failing system or build a new system if they will be required to connect to a sewer line in the foreseeable future. In the Appendix a summary can be found of the three points of view on the wastewater issue representing the KRLSSD, WLSSD and the citizen's perspective opposed to the sewer line. These statements were reviewed by each of the represented parties.

Valerie Prax, a Minnesota Extension Small Community Wastewater Systems educator, was invited to assist Larsmont residents in helping them better understand the wastewater planning process and share some examples of how other communities have planned for their wastewater needs. The Minnesota Extension program stresses a community based process for identifying wastewater needs and solutions. Through this process the community becomes educated about its wastewater needs, the various solutions they could apply and their implications (cost, ability to accommodate future development, maintenance, organizational needs etc.). Based on this understanding of needs and options the community can arrive at a solution that best meets their needs and has community support.

The Minnesota Extension presentation and the presentation of the three viewpoints regarding wastewater issues formed the starting point for a community discussion on wastewater. A detailed summary of the meeting discussing wastewater issues can be found in the Appendix.

Wastewater Vision:

1. A solution that addresses community wastewater needs

Residents are in agreement that all residents need to have access to a wastewater treatment solution that ensures proper treatment. However, there is less agreement on what the best solution is to accomplish this. Residents identified the following actions or outcomes that could help move this discussion forward and improve chances to reach community agreement:

- Conduct an assessment of septic systems and determine whether or not they are failing and, if so, how are they failing?
- Evaluate all options for addressing wastewater needs.
- Identify a solution that is both environmentally and economically sound.
- Focus on bringing failing systems into compliance and address imminent health threats.

Challenges:

The following themes emerge from the challenges discussed by the wastewater meeting participants:

- There is general agreement that a comprehensive analysis of wastewater needs and potential solutions is needed.
- Questions remain regarding the assumptions used to come up with the estimate for a per household connection fee and long term operating cost of a pipeline
- The challenge to get all community members engaged in the discussion of wastewater issues.
- The need to accommodate different interests – residents, corporate, and county – in the formulation of a solution.

Action Steps:

The action steps identified below can help address actions and outcomes listed under the *vision* and overcome the *challenges*. The actions identified by the participants covered a broad spectrum, and are summarized in themes below. Smaller groups could research various issues within the wastewater category and present recommendations back to the Larsmont community at large.

Provide more information to Larsmont residents on wastewater issues:

- Make an effort to get and document accurate information and make this available to the community. For example by getting objective factual information into the newspaper.
- Have an objective evaluation of all the (on-site) systems done.
- Clarify connection requirements so people can make a decision on whether to upgrade their current systems or not.

Funding:

- Address/clarify concerns about the source of funding and who will be asked to pay for the system.
- Look at options for more government subsidy.
- Pursue funding to assist people who can't afford to have systems inspected and to help them comply.

Mobilize community:

- Get more people involved in decision making.
- Learn more about township government.
- Explore options for local control.

What is clear from the identified action steps is that residents need more discussion and information about the wastewater problem and potential solutions. Residents need to arrive at an agreement about which options should be considered from a practical point of view, and come up with a process to reach community consensus. At this point there are diverging views relating to the extent of the problem, the practicality of various solutions, and the cost on a per household basis of the current proposed solution. In addition,

potential implications for land use as a result of different wastewater solutions are a consideration for some residents as well. The land use and wastewater issue can be dealt with separately to an extent. However, future land use intensity should inform decisions about appropriate wastewater treatment solutions.

3. Local control and governance:

Throughout the community meetings concerns were raised about how the interests of the Larsmont residents are represented at the county level and also to the KRLSD. A number of participants expressed an interest in finding ways to increase local control and influence over community issues by Larsmont area residents. Within this theme, control over land use issues and community input on county decisions were the biggest concerns. A number of people also expressed an interest in exploring the formation of a township.

In response to the interest expressed in learning more about township government, Jim Fisher, from the St. Louis County Association of Townships and Wendy Langanki and John Lind, from Silver Creek Township were invited to a meeting to discuss township issues. Key questions addressed through this presentation included:

- Process involved in forming a township
- Cost of operating a township compared to staying unincorporated
- Services and responsibilities a township can take on
- Resources available to a community to become an effective township

This presentation and the opportunity to ask questions were beneficial to area residents to help them become more informed about township government. Community members did not discuss at this point whether township government would be a desirable route to address some of the concerns relating to growth and development and wastewater issues. All present recognized more discussion would need to take place before the community could move forward on this. In addition, a congressional township would most likely include Knife River, and this community has had very limited involvement in the Larsmont discussions to date.

Appendix

Larsmont Meeting Summaries

Larsmont Community Visioning July 11 2005 Meeting Summary

In preparation for the meeting a summary was created by the facilitators of the key issues identified by the June 20th meeting participants. The facilitator reviewed the summary and asked the participants if they wanted to add any issues to the list. Consideration of forming a Township for the Larsmont area was added to the list. Following the review, each participant received 4 votes and had an opportunity to vote for the four issues that they saw as most important to be addressed in the community plan. Listed below are the themes and the total votes for each theme as well as the votes each individual issue received.

Issue Themes:

4. Growth and Development Concerns (28):
 - a. Impact of new development on community character 13
 - b. Development density 7
 - c. Type of development (condo's, town homes, resorts, timeshares) 1
 - d. Impact of development on drinking water quality and supply 1
 - e. Increased traffic 1
 - f. Community wastewater needs 2
 - g. Increased property values 3

5. Local control/influence over community issues (44):
 - a. Control over land use issues/planning and zoning 18
 - b. Increased property values-changing economics of use of property as a result of this. 1
 - c. Community input on county decisions 15
 - d. Lack of involvement from community members
 - e. Consider creating a Township 11

6. Community Wastewater needs (20):
 - a. Impacts of pipeline on development 5
 - b. Affordability 2
 - c. Need to address failing septic to protect water resource/environment 13

7. Water quality/Environment (18)
 - a. Protect water quality/Lake Superior 12
 - b. Address community wastewater needs 6

8. Commercial Development (18):
 - a. Address type of commercial services desirable for community 8
 - b. Resort/condo/timeshare development 10

The facilitator also summarized the vision statements generated by the June 20th meeting participants into 5 overarching themes. These were reviewed as well and no additions were made.

Community Vision Themes

1. Maintain Community Character and natural beauty, privacy and woods
2. Increased local control over issues impacting Larsmont
3. Control over future residential and commercial development
4. Balance between increased tax base and environment
5. Solution in place that addresses community wastewater needs

Following the review of the issues and vision themes the meeting participants numbered themselves off into three's in order to create randomly selected discussion groups. Each group discussed potential community actions that would need to be addressed in the community action plan that would work towards addressing the issues and attaining the community vision. It should be noted that the community vision and issues will need to be further refined as part of a broader community planning effort. A summary of the community actions as identified at the June 20th meeting is listed below. This summary was used by each of the group facilitators as a starting point for discussion and feedback. The discussion from each of these groups will help inform the community planning process and assist in identification of needs to be addressed as part of the planning process.

Each group discussed the three action themes for about 40 minutes. The groups then reconvened and shared their discussion results. What emerged from this was that there appeared to be a general consensus among the three groups on the issues and actions that need to be addressed. Key themes were a recognition that changes in development pressure have changed the needs for the community. Each group also recognized that the community needs a broad based discussion and more information on how to best address land use issues, wastewater needs and evaluate pro's and con's of the formation of a township.

Community Actions as summarized from the June 20th meeting:

1. Land use planning in Larsmont Area
 - a. Develop a plan / vision for the community
 - b. Address community concerns through zoning, such as limiting certain uses and regulating densities
 - c. Participate in other planning efforts (County, NSMB, State of the Coast)
2. Increase local control/influence of decisions:
 - a. Organize and participate in (county) decision making processes
 - b. Education and outreach on community issues to residents and property owners.
 - c. Incorporate as a township to increase local control on community issues
3. Establish consensus on addressing community wastewater needs:
 - a. Work with MN Extension on discussion of wastewater alternatives

Group 1 Community Actions Discussion:

1. Land use planning in Larsmont Area

a. Develop a plan/vision for the community

- We have a plan/vision with the county. We need to be sure our plan and theirs don't conflict.
- We need to see what the county plan is to determine if we agree with it or not.

b. Address community concerns through zoning, such as limiting certain uses and regulating densities

- I agree we can express our concerns through zoning.
- The county limits uses.
- Zoning now varies with the area.
- We need education on what the options are.
- The county just finished a 2-year comprehensive plan. I don't know what's in the plan.
- The zoning is 2 ½ acres where I live. The other side of the road is 10 acres.
- If we don't want a change in the zoning we can go to planning and zoning meetings.
- The county must consider the issues.
- Other areas are zoned Resort Commercial.
- Larsmont is not all shoreline. The residents not on the shore may not want the same as shoreline residents.
- There has been a gas station proposed in Knife River for 5 years and it's not been done because people opposed it.
- Problems and concerns are already being handled by the county board. They will listen to us and the concerns will be addressed.
- We need to be more vigilant and pay attention to what's happening. If we don't like it we need to say something.
- The 2 acre requirement is through the North Shore Board. Make it official. Satisfy the density concern with an acreage requirement.
- I'm grandfathered on just a ¼ acre lot.
- What has been grandfathered you can have, but that's not what is allowed now.
- Larsmont residents do not always get messages. Residents are not notified and then they have no say.
- The county decides what the area is for Larsmont. It should be above the freeway too.
- I live on Larsmont Road. That should be part of Larsmont.
- There is a variance article for the Ryan/Odyssey Development in the Chronicle about Larsmont. If you're concerned, go to the meeting and speak up.
- You have to go to meetings.
- Zoning is affected by the sewer plan efforts.

c. Participate in other planning efforts (County, NSMB, State of the Coast)

- The sewer plan effort was by the North Shore Management Board. Larry Moon was on that.
- What power do they have? (No one knew)
- We need more education on the issue.
- The State of the Coast networking group is a good idea.

2. Increase local control/influence of decisions:

a. Organize and participate in (county) decision making processes

- As issues pertain to Larsmont we should participate, read the paper and attend meetings.
- That's something we should do.
- I agree that we should participate. I'm concerned about how. I'm opposed to forming a township. There are steps we can take on issues of concern and not cost residents the costs of a township.
- We have yet to see what developing a township is.
- Silver Creek has become a township. The township is responsible for roads and sewer. We should have them come talk to us and find out what it costs.
- It might increase the tax base. Then we would draw funds from residents for services.
- I've talked to Leo Babeau, the clerk of Ault Township, for his suggestions. He said their community talked about whether they should be a township or not. He said an important aspect is the level of township you become. You can decide if you want to take over roads and zoning or let the county continue to do that. Right now we are paying the county taxes for services for Unorganized Territory #2. As a township, some of those taxes for services would be paid to the township and some to the county.
- We need to find out more.
- We need a community action group. Many meetings happen during the days and it's hard to go to them.
- We need to determine what to do. It's a good thing that we are getting together to look at our current situation.
- The Larsmont Community Club now takes care of the schoolhouse building. It's a nonprofit. The money for maintenance to the building is given to us from the rec board.

b. Education and outreach on community issues to residents and property owners

- I worry about being inclusive. We can't force people to come, but we should let them know about the meetings.
- We should meet and vote to determine if we have a township or not. You will find those with hard-core interests now. Many may jump on later or not get involved.
- The Larsmont picnic is in August. There is a notice sent out to when it is. That is a network to notify people.
- How far does the notice go?

- There is a list and a blurb is put in the paper.
- They use the voting list for Unorganized Territory #2 to send out the notices.
- We could set up a table at the picnic with information.
- I'd be opposed to that. The Community Club is a social group. They need to be kept separate from this group.
- Community education and outreach should be done.

c. Incorporate as a township to increase local control on community issues

- I disagree that we should do that.
- I disagree, as I don't know what it would do.
- I think we need more information.
- We need more information.
- We need to be careful.
- It would create more bureaucracy. Now we can approach the county board. With a township you would have the same thing. You would just give a different group our decision making. We should form a voice as community. A township could add expense for residents for taking care of roads. You would need to generate funds to keep a township.
- It must be looked at.
- We need to be vigilant with what neighbors are doing. They don't always follow the county guidelines. Developers do what they want and pay the penalties afterwards, as it's cheaper.
- The county board has always been receptive. They listen. If it applies to their jurisdiction. You talk to them, but it may not always turn out as you wish.
- Willard Clark was invited to this meeting. He is not an adversary to this process. He will support our activity and what we, his constituents want. He has difficulty coming to meetings because of his diabetes.
- We may look at our boundaries differently. It may not come out as we vs. them.
- We should have someone come speak to us about becoming a township.
- Michael Hoops/Coops (?) is the president of Silver Creek Township. We could ask him.

3. Establish consensus on addressing community wastewater needs:

a. Work with MN Extension on discussion of wastewater alternatives

- Have someone come talk to us in August.
- John's Breezy Point and Wagon Wheel are always looking for more capacity.
- Is anyone aware of the loan we took for the pipeline's planning effort? If we became a township we must pay that back. I don't want to pay that back.
- Larry Moon and Dick Loining did a study. They thought the sewer line would go through. Knife River spent \$95,000 and Larsmont \$425,000 that must be paid back. Right now it's spread over the county.
- It must be paid back either way.
- Why did we pay for the study?

- We received money from the county to do it. Knife River didn't want to get involved.
- The cost has been an accumulation of over 7-9 years of planning. Engineers don't do anything unless they get paid.

Group 2 Community Actions Discussion

Land Use Planning for the Larsmont Area:

The group started by discussing how the community should address development issues. The following observations were made by group members:

- The residents need to make a commitment to address land use issues
- The change in development in the Larsmont area requires a different approach to land use issues and development controls for the community.
- The community may have a limited ability to influence county land use decisions. The community may therefore need to resort to more official controls. Some participants expressed concern with the limited responsiveness of county elected officials on community matters.
- Communication with seasonal and area residents in general on these issues is important. It is hard for seasonal residents to be involved in development issues.

The group then discussed how residents could get involved in community planning issues:

- It was observed that the creation of a comprehensive mailing list has been difficult. Need to work with Count Assessor's office to create a comprehensive list.
- Create a newsletter for the community.

The group then discussed the potential difficulties relating to taking on zoning administration

- Residents need to understand the pro's and con's of taking on zoning responsibilities at the local level. How the zoning may impact them is going to determine their support.
- Silvercreek Township has experienced challenges in administrating its sub-district.
- Larsmont would need to incorporate as a township in order to take on zoning responsibility.

Increase local control/influence of decisions

- As noted above participants observed that there may be limitations as to how much influence residents currently have as an unorganized area on decisions impacting the Larsmont Area.
- Changes in development pressure may warrant more local control on decisions impacting the community.
- Incorporating as a township could increase control but also comes with a host of responsibilities and cost to the residents. The community needs to understand the pro's and con's of such a change and needs to be educated on this. It was

suggested that a representative from the MN Township association could present at one of the community meetings.

Establishing consensus on community wastewater needs:

- Learning about wastewater alternatives through the MN Extension service is an important step in the process of educating residents on the options.
- There is consensus on the fact the community will need a solution to deal with wastewater issues long term. There is not consensus on what the solution(s) should be.
- The community planning process can offer a forum for residents to come to a consensus.
- The County has not played a pro-active role in addressing failing septic systems. The county has not yet required that systems that were found to be imminent health threats be fixed.
- There needs to be better communication on wastewater issues with the residents. Residents/property owners that were part of the septic system assessment did not receive results of the test unless there was an imminent health threat.

The group further discussed what they saw as the driving factors regarding the wastewater discussion:

- Residents are currently in limbo regarding whether they should invest in a new septic system or remain on a holding tank and wait for the sewer line to be completed. When investing in a new system residents run the risk of later being required to have to pay an assessment for the line. Financial concerns are a key issue.
- Financial concerns are also an issue in general as construction cost of the line have increased.
- Wastewater infrastructure could allow for increased development pressure to build at higher densities.
- The area has limitations for drinking water. Increased development may create problems for the sustainability of the area's drinking water supply.
- A number of participants indicated they saw the need for a process for the community to address the concerns discussed above.

Next Steps:

Valerie Prax from MN Extension will present in August on wastewater issues and a community based wastewater planning approach.

A Lake Superior Coastal Zone STAR grant has been applied for. If awarded this will offer the resources needed to continue the community planning process. The results from the June and July meetings will for the starting point for focusing further community discussions and the development of a community action plan.

Larsmont Community Action Plan Meeting 1 10-05-05 Meeting Summary

On October 5, 2005, 36 participants that identified themselves as Larsmont residents or property owners participated in a community planning process. The meeting participants appeared to be a good cross section of the community including year round and seasonal residents, business owners and representatives from the development community. This meeting was the first in a series of 4 meetings to develop a community action plan for the Larsmont Community. The objectives of this community action plan is to create consensus on:

1. A shared community vision, priorities and next steps to work towards this community vision.
2. The establishment of an action plan committee or committees that will work on implementing the action plan. The plan will then be presented to the Lake County Board, Knife River Larsmont Sanitary District and other relevant government entities.

At this meeting, the discussion focused primarily on land use issues. At the start of the meeting a number of residents questioned how the Larsmont Community is defined. At this point the community is defined broadly. Every resident or property owner who feels they are a part of the Larsmont Community is welcome to participate in this planning process. It is recognized that at some point this will need to be defined more narrowly.

A second question was that of legitimacy and Minnesota Environmental Partnership's role in leading this planning effort. The answer to that question is that a number of residents approached Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP) with a request to help facilitate a community dialogue on a community vision that looks at both land use and wastewater issues. Since the Larsmont Community is an unorganized Township there was no formal structure in place, other than the County, to work on this issue. The community residents that initiated the process requested a grant through the Minnesota Lake Superior Coastal Program. This grant needs to be administrated by either a government or non-profit entity. MEP offered to administer this grant and coordinate retaining a facilitator for the planning process. The role of the MEP and the facilitator is to give the residents a structure to discuss their vision for the community and identify strategies to implement this vision. The facilitator will prepare the meeting agenda, review this at the beginning of each meeting for approval, will record the discussion that takes place at each meeting, and share this back with the meeting participants and stakeholders that have expressed an interest in the process. It is up to the community members to develop the plan, identify strategies, and implement the strategies.

The meeting started off with a brief overview on land use issues presented by the Lake County Planning Director Matt Huddleston. Matt presented the current zoning in place, discussed the Planned Unit Development Moratorium in place, and the process the County is following to develop new Planned Unit Development Standards. Larsmont community members will have opportunities throughout the ordinance development process to review the draft ordinance and comment.

Vision Exercise:

The group started out with a discussion on their vision for future development in the Larsmont Community. Participants were given five minutes to write down their thoughts and then each participant had an opportunity to share their vision with the rest of the group. Statements that were repeated have a number to indicate the number of residents who identified this statement as an important aspect of their vision for the community.

5. Remain rural (low traffic, country living) (2)
6. Residential (3)
7. Family oriented business that attract lower traffic (2)
8. Less development, less traffic (traffic around Two Harbors already too much)
9. I feel the same. I live up the hill of Segog.
10. Maintain the rural landscape, keep wildlife
11. Small business owners (mom and pop operations) with family residence on property. Would like to see continuation of small cabins and campground operations and not conversion to larger condo developments) (2)
12. Keep Larsmont character with single family homes and small family owned businesses (need to set boundaries) (2)
13. Backlots development with viewsheds and deeded lake access (in subdivisions) rather than all development located right on the lake.
14. Limited development, protect the lake from pollutants and run-off, waste treatment systems small and clustered. (keep community small) (3)
15. Concerned about high density areas, wants well defined and enforced growth. Have development controls in place and enforced by the County.
16. Develop in a way that does not compromise true value of the area. Have reasonable open space development. Have medium to lower density development with high quality construction standards in place based on historical character (design, architectural standards, codes). Have very well controlled commercial standards, signage standards, roads and lighting standards.
17. Have the current private residential interest maintained and have those that are impacted by decisions have a say in these decisions.
18. Have the Larsmont community have a management/supervisory role with enforcement (management) power at the local level.
19. The area needs infrastructural upgrades in order to move forward. Investments needed for cell phone, fiber optic, cable and sewage systems
20. Have Larsmont stay a small community with mom and pop businesses.
21. Hope for Larsmont to have local control
22. Always try to improve what we have
23. Have it easy to know what does and doesn't belong e.g. have design standards that fit with community character.
24. Include Knife River in the planning area.
25. Have single family put into conservatory (conservation easements), freeze value, makes properties less valuable but with inflated lake property wouldn't hurt.
26. Character-mix of resorts and residential in central Larsmont Area currently in place. Maintain this and controlled development, allow for growth with input. Infrastructure has to be upgraded. Allow for some commercial development to

- serve community along the freeway. Respond to change in residential development between Two Harbors and Knife River.
27. Growth is going to happen. Have retained small community so people are still happy. Have growth well laid out through planning.
 28. Have an appropriate mix between commercial and residential development. Have building standards. Need to be open to some change or appropriate change. Mom and Pop operations not economically viable. Have mandatory compliance for wastewater systems and inspections as part of the ordinance.
 29. Protection of rivers, streams and forests.
 30. Future residents will have internet based home occupations. They will want low maintenance housing, view of lake, opportunities to walk along the lake, open space, services, sewer services and internet backbone.
 31. Bayfield and Madeleine Island as models. The communities appreciate and display historical cultural and artistic traditions.
 32. Incorporate the state of the coast conference lessons
 33. Learn from place like Minnetonka who have dealt with growth
 34. Some respect for private property.

Following the vision discussion the facilitator identified some common themes. These themes are summarized below. These themes reflect the general discussion but should not be seen at this point as a group consensus. It was decided that for the second meeting the facilitators will organize the comments in grouped themes and have a process in place that can assign some weight to the different vision elements identified during this meeting to clarify elements of the vision that share broad support.

Common themes:

- Maintaining community character. Maintain current mix of residential and small scale commercial development.
- Have standards developed and implemented that allow for growth management that recognizes the community values.
- Acknowledge some growth and change is going to happen and have community development standards in place that guide this change in such a way that it reflects community character.
- As the community growth occurs and or changes, its infrastructure needs will change.
- Protect the environmental quality of the area.

Opportunities/Challenges Exercise:

Following the vision exercise, participants were asked to write down what they saw as opportunities that would help the community move forward in the direction of the vision discussed above. They were also asked to identify challenges or issues that would need to be overcome in order to move forward towards the community vision. The following opportunities were identified by the participants:

Opportunities:

1. Financing for sewer in place. Need to find way to pay for long term investment.
2. Find opportunities for employment
3. Need to un-link wastewater issues and development. See how wastewater issues and development can co-exist.
4. Economics and pressure for population influx. Dollars will come to the area, the question is how do you funnel this.
5. Need to be realistic and need growth for people in the area.
6. Form a committee to review what is in place and improve the relationship and communication with the county.
7. Get the plan in place and take action
8. Consider how to provide for adequate wastewater services for increased development above the freeway.
9. Run for County commission.
10. Economic opportunities/livable wages.
11. Identifying a county level spokes person for Larsmont.
12. Explore what it would mean to become a township.
13. Protect the opportunity for individual opinions to be heard.
14. Development of a community action plan.
15. Consider township government to solve local issues and create a more equal footing with the county.
16. Need a community based regulatory framework in place.
17. Need a management group that represents the area and can work with county, two harbors and Knife River communities. Liked area/85% county is public lands, need to define Larsmont Area.
18. Privacy is important
19. Live in peace/quiet-more harmony with the county board. There are enough rules, dealing with them as a business owner. No need for more, they need to be enforced.
20. Need to get sewer discussion finalized so business decisions for treatment can be made.
21. Have a voice in management of growth.
22. Define the community
23. Keep county commissioners involved and call them.
24. Keep community involved about what happens
25. Development brings economic development/maintain character.

Challenges:

1. Defining Larsmont boundaries; get representatives in contact with others.
2. Define Larsmont; create regulations
3. Keep people who live here represented.
4. Strike balance between pressures
5. Cost-money issue
6. Build relationships between new temporary residents and permanent.
7. Improve communication in the community and between Knife River and County.
8. Rules limit small business.
9. Establish wastewater plan for whole for nominal fee.
10. Management, building codes, zoning, wastewater (2)
11. Keep it simple
12. Accomplish half of vision
13. Community voice
14. Avoid apathy by letting them know how things affect community.
15. Find consensus and follow through.
16. Economics, balance pressure for overdevelopment and financial gain with vision.
17. Overcome people's fear of change.

Actions:

The evening ended with a brief discussion on actions based on the opportunities and challenges identified. Participants discussed how to best move forward. Opinions included a preference for working in smaller groups. Others voiced the opinion to continue to work with a large group like this evening, rather than in smaller groups. A consensus seemed to develop that the second meeting should be another large group meeting to continue the discussion. Residents also seemed to agree that in order to implement the plan smaller groups will need to work on issue areas and that the results of these smaller groups at certain points should be shared with the community at large for review and approval. It was recognized that with Larsmont being an undefined and unorganized geographic area, a challenge is the legitimacy of to what extent workgroup participants represent the community at large. It is therefore important the community has some process in place that can establish some community consensus in issues and ensure multiple perspectives within the community are represented.

The following actions were identified by the participants:

1. Smaller groups should work on issues and bring this back to the larger group.
2. Do an environmental plan (EIS)
3. Have a township presentation.
4. Work with others.
5. Keep up with information
6. Keep the larger group informed.
7. Ask the county to regulate wastewater systems, address enforcement and management.
8. Do vision and decide as group, keep vision in front of us.
9. All wastewater options open, but everything should be up to code.

10. Attend county board meetings, “we” communicate with the board.
11. Large group better.
12. Form an association. Have group of 5-10 people collect information and present this to the group at large.

Larsmont Community Action Plan Meeting 2 October 17, 2005 Meeting Summary

Meeting review

Rudy Schoolderman presented an overview of the previous meeting and asked for comments and feedback from the participants. The vision summary statements were posted for comments and feedback. The group was asked to consider:

- Do these reflect the common ground of what was discussed at the previous meeting?
- Are they summarized in a way that makes sense?
- Are these outcomes the group can get behind?
- Are people comfortable to sign off on these as common ground?

Comments from meeting participants:

- These are outcomes we can get behind, but a broad spectrum is represented here
- More definition is needed – they're too broad
- Each person reading it can see all viewpoints
- The biggest issue is what is meant by “adequate infrastructure”?

Julie O'Leary presented the three viewpoints on the wastewater issue as a starting point for the meeting participants to discuss wastewater management concerns for the Larsmont Area. Representatives of each group that holds this viewpoint reviewed the written statements. The statements are attached at the end of the meeting notes. Julie also reviewed some of the requirements the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District has identified as necessary prerequisites for extending their service boundaries to include Larsmont.

The group then conducted an exercise to identify desirable outcomes for wastewater treatment for the Larsmont Area and challenges that the community will face in reaching this desired outcome, and action steps to move forward on this issue. Below is a summary of the viewpoints the meeting participants presented.

Desirable Wastewater Outcomes

- Bring failing septic systems in to compliance
- Identify how many failing systems there are and how this is determined
- A decentralized solution
- Research on needs: Are systems failing? How are they failing? Prefer for private systems – concerned about cost
- Immediate correction of systems posing imminent health threats
- A comprehensive survey of options for solutions – consider all options
- Look at the big picture of the problem – then decide what to do about it
- Develop comprehensive method to determine environmentally and economically sound solutions to the wastewater problem
- Fix failing septic system problem – feels pipeline is the best solution

Challenges

- A pipeline has been supported to the exclusion of other alternatives; more information is needed for WLSSD and residents - do a comprehensive analysis.
- Accuracy of financial information being used
- Look at all of the different interests – county, residents, corporate
- Diversity of the community – the challenge is to come to consensus on sound wastewater methods by getting everyone to sit at the table
- There is extreme variation in the ability to pay - need to address affordability and help those who can't pay
- Need to get all residents involved and get a better turnout at meetings (2)
- Maintenance and management of the systems that we have
- Unlink the issue of proper wastewater solution from density/zoning concerns
- Knowledgeable inspectors and allow lots to be large enough to insure compliance
- Need accurate and current cost information, regardless of who pays. Make sure all costs are included over 20 years
- More information on all impacts to residents needs to be gathered – not just the cost. What would the connection fee be for a pipeline? How much land is needed for cluster systems?
- Getting everyone together to get a plan and then enforcing it (authority)
- County officials are not adequately doing their job with regard to compliance enforcement

Action Steps

- Get accurate information out so everyone can make an informed decision, then act
- Get all the information out to Larsmont residents
- Have a community vote once information is out
- Go after more government subsidy
- Mobilize the community to form a local government
- Where's the money? Who's going to pay?
- Limit density of development until we know the cost (work with the county to address this)
- Need some good hard facts and objective information in the paper
- Get more people involved in making decisions
- Learn more about township government – have a speaker come
- Pursue money for people who can't afford to have systems inspected and to help them comply
- Have an objective evaluation of the (on-site) systems done
- Explore levels/options for local control
- Reach resolution about direction so people can make decisions about whether or not to upgrade their systems

Next steps

From the discussion it was evident that there were differing opinions on information presented on the wastewater issue. The group indicated that it was interested in having a panel discussion with experts that could help clarify the various perspectives and assumptions that are at the basis of these perspectives. Issues include the financial burden of the pipeline for property owners, connection requirements and failure rates and evaluation of treatment alternatives for the Larsmont Area.

There was a discussion of who might be part of this presentation. Suggestions included staff from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, WLSSD, the financial consultant who has generated the cost estimates for the Knife River Larsmont Sanitary District (KRLSD), and the individual who performed the partial survey of on-site systems in the Larsmont Planning Area. Julie O'Leary will make contacts and look at setting up something like this.

Potential dates of November 28 or 30 were suggested as the next meeting date, with the topic to be an informational presentation on the topic of township government.

Larsmont Wastewater Viewpoints Present at October 17th Meeting:

Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD)

(Viewpoint reviewed by Dan Belden, Senior Planner, WLSSD)

The Western Lake Superior Sanitary District operates the wastewater treatment plant in Duluth and provides wastewater services to Duluth, Cloquet, Hermantown, Proctor, and the surrounding area. WLSSD is governed by an appointed board which represents its service area.

The Larsmont Planning Area is located outside of WLSSD's Legislative boundaries and also outside of the Urban Services Boundary as defined in WLSSD's 2003 Comprehensive Wastewater Services Master Plan. WLSSD has no obligation to accept wastewater from Larsmont, but it can agree to do so.

WLSSD has agreed to accept the wastewater from the Knife River collection system that currently serves Knife River. This wastewater will be transported to WLSSD via the Duluth North Shore Sanitary District pipeline.

WLSSD has been asked to also accept wastewater from the Larsmont area, and has responded to this request by asking the Knife River/Larsmont Sanitary District to provide information that would support such a request.

The information requested is detailed in Attachment J to the Knife River Capacity Allocation Agreement with the KRLSD board, dated Nov. 17, 2004 and in a letter dated May 25, 2005 to Joe McGaver of Ayres Associates and Larry Moon.

At this time, WLSSD has not received adequate information on which to base a decision.

Knife River/Larsmont Sanitary District (KRLSD)

(Viewpoint provided by Larry Moon, KRLSD board chair)

The KRLSD is a combination of the original Knife River Sanitary District and the Larsmont Subordinate Service District, and is responsible for providing wastewater services in the Larsmont area. KRLSD board members are appointed by the Lake County Board.

Over the past ten years, KRLSD has made efforts to obtain funding support for construction of a pipeline serving the area of Larsmont bounded by Lake Superior and the four-lane expressway, Knife River and Two Harbors.

As of August, 2003, the estimated cost to construct the proposed pipeline was \$8,450,000.

Several sources of funds are available for the project:

A Public Facilities Authority grants would cover \$3,675,000 of the costs. The Minnesota Legislature passed special legislation to make these grant funds available at a rate of \$25,000 per residential unit for North Shore projects instead of the normal \$15,000. In addition, Senator Tom Bakk and Representative David Dill were able to get a bill passed providing an additional \$1,500,000 for the proposed Larsmont pipeline. The remaining \$3,275,000 would be covered by a low interest construction loan through the Public Facilities Authority.

With the additional development in Larsmont, more users would contribute to the user fees and debt service assessment. The County Board could also consider contributing some of the additional taxes from the development for a period of time, as they did in Castle Danger. New revenue estimates will need to be made for the project. Some of the monthly payments for user service in both Knife River and the D/NSSD go for debt service. As new users come on line, this allows for adjustment of the revenue stream since the original special assessments to property owners cannot be changed. A similar concept is factored into the Larsmont projections.

During the last 3-4 years, a proposal was made to consider closing the Knife River wastewater treatment facility and to hook the Knife River system up to the recently completed Duluth North Shore Sanitary District (DNSSD) pipeline, sending the wastewater directly to Duluth for treatment. The KRLSD board voted to do this, WLSSD agreed to accept the wastewater, and a contract with WLSSD was signed on Nov. 17, 2004.

As a part of the Knife River contract, WLSSD outlined the requirements for information about the Larsmont area that would be needed before any decision could be made to accept the Larsmont wastewater.

The Larsmont project is currently on hold until an agreement can be reached with WLSSD.

Larsmont Property Owners Opposed to the Pipeline

(Viewpoint provided by Marv Holt)

The effort to address wastewater issues in the Larsmont area bounded by Lake Superior and the four-lane expressway, Knife River and Two Harbors started in 1995 – 1996. In 1998, Ayres Associates made presentations illustrating several options for handling the area wastewater. Only the pipeline option was pursued by the KRLSD. This was the most expensive solution proposed by Ayers.

In August of 1998, a resident sent the Lake County Commissioners a letter protesting the decision to pursue the proposed pipeline. It was pointed out that other alternatives were being ignored. A response to this letter came from a member of the County Commissioners rejecting the alternatives suggested and stating that “it would not be acceptable to the county.”

Since that time, the KRLSD board has spent over \$302,000 designing the proposed pipeline.

The KRLSD board sent an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) to the MPCA, knowing that there was no agreement with WLSSD to accept the wastewater. For this reason, MPCA returned the EAW with no action.

They have not responded to the requests for information from WLSSD concerning the Larsmont project.

At this point the Larsmont pipeline project is on hold. The KRLSD board approved a motion in June to suspend any further expenditure of funds for the pipeline until an agreement can be reached with WLSSD.

State grant funds for this project cannot be released until an agreement is reached with WLSSD and the EAW has been re-submitted to the MPCA and approved.

In October 2003, a letter was sent to 135 Larsmont property owners, asking their position on the pipeline. Of the 85 property owners responding to the letter, 82 were against the proposed pipeline.

Based on the August 2003 cost estimates for the construction of the proposed pipeline, it will cost the Larsmont residents approximately \$113 per month for 20 years to pay back the construction loan, plus an estimated \$45 - \$50 per month for the operation of the proposed pipeline. After the construction loan is paid back, half of the \$3, 675,000 PFA grant must be paid back over the next 20 years.