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## **State of Water and Sewer – September 2014**

### *DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION*

During the Labor Day weekend I went into the utility room in the basement and found that the water and sewer were in some way compromised. There was water on the floor by the piping where the water comes into the house from the utility and there were indications of effluent from the grinder pump area.

It was apparent that the piping for the water had fallen away from the wall, and closer inspection showed that there were was a small amount of leakage from the various joints.

The grinder pump pit was covered with two pieces of plyscore, one large covering most of the pit and a smaller piece for the rest. The main effluent pipe went through a space between the two pieces. I removed the screws fixing the big piece and removed it. I then removed the small piece and saw that the effluent pipe had been sheared off.

On Tuesday morning I called Toni Lynch (Better World Building Technology- BWBT) to report the situation and get assistance.

When Toni examined the water piping, and moved the pipe assembly, one of the small leaks became a flood ... and he had to hold the piping together to avert a major flow of water into the room. These leaks were all on the water company side of the shut off valves. I put in an emergency call to the Water Company (American Pennsylvania Water Company) and in turn their call center in Illinois put in an emergency dispatch call back to their local people. Some time later the water was turned off by the water company. Toni disassembled the piping to enable repair.

We did not immediately have at hand the name of the sub-contractor who had done the installation of the grinder pump during the 2012 construction. Saw Creek gave me two names, and I called both of them to appraise them of the broken effluent pipe problem. One the names was Semper Fi and the other ???.

Next day (Wednesday) I got in touch Semper Fi. They thought that they had done the work and came almost immediately. It turned out that Semper Fi had done work on another system, but not this one.

In any event, Semper Fi fixed the pipe in short order. I was told that the cut off float needed replacing, and that there was no emergency warning. I agreed that this should be fixed and the float was replaced. There was no warning system on the truck so this was not done on the Tuesday but put off until the next day. The system could not be tested because there was no water coming into the house.

Later after Semper Fi had departed, Toni returned to rebuild the pipework for the water. This was done, I called for the water to be turned back on and Toni departed. Some time after Toni departed, the water company turned the water back on.

Next day (Thursday) Shaun, an employee of Semper Fi came with the emergency alarm system and installed it. He seemed to test it to make sure it was working and left. Before he left, I paid Semper Fi for the work they had done and the materials they had supplied.

On Friday, I heard the alarm going off ... turned off the alarm and the electricity and called Toni and Semper Fi. Shaun returned and after doing some tests he advised me that the grinder pump motor was not responsive. I was given a price of \$2,500 to replace the pump and motor assembly.

I went through the paperwork associated with the construction and located the name of the sub-contractor, it turned out to be KMB Plumbing. I contacted KMB Plumbing on Monday and arranged for them to come to check things out. They came with a replacement grinder pump on Thursday (Tuesday, I was not available, Wednesday they were not available).

On Thursday Kevin of KMB Plumbing came with two staff. He confirmed that KMB had done the work during the reconstruction, but he stated he was not responsible for anything because others had done work on the system. He noted that the cover on the electricity panel was open. He noted that the 'stickers' he puts on his work were also missing. He noted the new alarm system, and asked where was the alarm system he had installed. We went into the kitchen (upstairs on the main floor) and he indicated where the alarm would have been. There was no evidence of an alarm or of any wiring that would be needed. He knew the name of the electrical sub-contractor. Kevin tested the grinder pump motor and advised that the motor was 'fried'.

He told me that the grinder pump was manufactured by Keener. We were unable to read the model number and serial number on the equipment. I was told this would be on the invoice. Kevin talked to a representative of Keener on the phone. I was told that the replacement grinder pump would cost in the range of \$2,500 and that this was after a \$500 discount in light of the circumstances.

On Thursday, I made the decision not to proceed with a replacement at this time until there was some more clarity about who was responsible for what. The several parties concerned were all claiming no responsibility, and the owner was being left holding the bag.

During the visit of KMB Plumbing on Thursday, I was told that the full details of what had been installed would be on the invoice to BWBT. Subsequently I located a copy of this invoice and all it stated was that an E1-201 had been replaced with no reference whatsoever as to the equipment that had been installed.

Several times in conversation Toni (BWBT) advised me that the sub-contractor that installed the grinder pump was not his choice but a contractor that was authorized by Saw Creek (the development). I was unable to confirm this with Saw Creek (the Saw Creek Estates Community Association (SCECA) ... the managers of the development). Subsequently I have concluded that Toni was using information that related to the 1970s and 1980s when Peter Arhart was the owner of the development and making the rules and subsequently kept on by the Rank Organization when they were in charge. During this time they required all the grinder pumps to be the E1 pump and purchased through them. This leaves open the question how JMB was selected.

## Conclusions

### FAULT #1 ... water leaks

BWBT / plumbing sub-contractor were the cause of the water leaks. They cut into the old piping in a way that subsequently failed.

This has been resolved by BWBT fixing the problem.

### FAULT #2 ... broken effluent pipe

BWBT / plumbing sub-contractor / grinder pump sub-contractor (KMB Plumbing) / carpenter sub-contractor were the cause of the broken effluent pipe. One part of this problem is that new equipment (a new grinder pump) was installed and then linked to the sewer line with a plastic pipe that was already about 20 years old. The problem was aggravated by the carpenters who made a cover that locked the plastic pipe into position not allowing the plastic to move and absorb hydraulic shocks. Eventually the pipe sheared. The grinder pump contractor Semper Fi repaired the broken effluent pipe.

### FAULT #3 ... no alarm for the grinder pump system

BWBT / grinder pump sub-contractor (KMB Plumbing) / electrical sub-contractor were the cause of no alarm for the grinder pump system. There is no evidence that an alarm was installed though the grinder pump sub-contractor insists that he installed one and that the alarm was in the kitchen. He also insists that he put 'stickers' with contact information that would have been visible, but there is no evidence that they ever existed.

### FAULT #4 ... grinder pump motor no longer works

Grinder pump contractor (Semper Fi) was the cause of the grinder pump not working, but others were also a part of the cause especially BWBT / grinder pump sub-contractor (KMB Plumbing). If the sticker situation had not been compromised it would have been possible to contact KMB plumbing on a timely basis. As it was BWBT advised that a contractor approved by Saw Creek had been used and this led to contacting Semper Fi. Semper Fi noted the absence of an alarm and also noted a defect in the turnoff float and this was replaced. If the water had been running as it should have been then Semper Fi would have been able to do a more effective test. Because there was no water coming into the house at the time, the system was not tested at this time. The following day, an alarm was installed, the system tested with water. The following day, the alarm goes off, and on inspection by Semper Fi it is found that the motor is not working. Subsequent

inspection by KMB Plumbing confirms the motor is not running and it is reported that the turnoff float is incorrectly adjusted.

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On Tuesday September 16, the situation was evaluated by AllState Septic LLC who added much new information.

They confirmed that the Grinder Pump motor was not working. They advised that the float switch was correctly installed and they confirmed that the alarm system was working the way in should. In other words, the pump motor had not failed because of the faulty work done by Semper Fi.

It turns out that the tank is the tank used by Environmental 1 (E1) but the grinder pump mechanism is manufactured by Keener Pumps