

# EPA pushes Shenandoah on sewers

By Linda Martz  
News Journal

**SHENANDOAH** — The Ohio EPA is drafting an order requiring a community sewer system in Shenandoah, Richland County commissioners said Thursday.

That means the county may need to act promptly to build a system costing \$934,000 — with or without a \$200,000 state block grant that could save property owners from being assessed \$6,000 each, County Commissioner Ed Olson said.

Olson said the EPA is impatient with delays local officials have encountered trying to gather financial information from Shenandoah residents that would prove at least 51 percent of residents are in the low- or moderate-income ranges.

That proof is needed to obtain the state grant, the final piece of a funding package that might let residents escape assessments.

Shenandoah contains only 37 homes or businesses. The EPA wants the village to replace old septic tanks. Commissioners say septic effluent flows into ditches off Ohio 13.

K.E. McCartney and Associates, hired by commissioners, came up with a plan for a decentralized community sewer, Olson said. Without outside funding, property owners would have to be assessed an average of \$25,000 apiece, he said.

The consultants also proposed a funding package to help the community pay for a large project. That included \$400,000 in State Issue 2 grants and loans, a \$200,000 research and innovation grant through the Ohio Water Development Authority and the \$200,000 community development block grant.

Federal and state officials see the Shenandoah proposal as a potential pilot project that shows how to deal with stream pollution issues in hundreds of small rural communities, Olson said.

“The EPA would like to clean up pollution in all these little villages” that are too far from metropolitan areas to be hooked into existing systems, and where a small population makes the cost prohibitive, said Wayne Bishop of K.E. McCartney.

Commissioner Dan Hardwick said an EPA staffer said he is writing orders requiring the county to act.

“The EPA has said, ‘you’ve got the Public Works Commission money, you’ve got the innovation grant. You could start this project and just assess these people for the difference,’” Olson said.

County officials have established that 47 percent of residents are low- to moderate-income, but have hit roadblocks obtaining household income figures from some residents. At least seven property owners have not responded, despite door-to-door visits and a mailing campaign.

If the EPA issues an order to build the sewer system, failure to do so could result in the county being sued, Olson said. “Before I would ask everybody in the county to contribute to a \$10,000-a-day fine, my suggestion is, we have about six people in Shenandoah who should fill out the form ...” the commissioner said.

Commissioner Dave Swartz said Thursday afternoon the problem may be solved. One address that didn’t respond belongs to a closed business, and another apparently contains a shed but no house.

[lmartz@nncogannett.com](mailto:lmartz@nncogannett.com)  
(419) 521-7229