

Guest Columnist

Jerry Pittman

Who is Fooling Who?

While there are many good, honest, and competent people working in Brown County's Health Department, there are some who have used their position to advance their own agendas that are not in the best interest of Brown County's Citizenry.

Based on past history, it would be a huge mistake for our community to enact an amended Septic Ordinance that deviates from, and is tougher than Indiana State Law. This is exactly what is being proposed by the Brown County Health Department.

I make this statement based on **Proof of past actions, lies and deceit from our Health Department**, which are clearly exemplified as follows:

The First Step a Sewer Board must take is to prove a **"Need"** for each and every sewer installation it makes. "Need" is usually proven by identifying:

1. Environmental problems with failed septic systems that a sewer can remedy,
2. Economic expansion or development opportunities a sewer will create, or
3. The residents (users) who will have to pay for this service want a sewer installed.

Absent one or more of these "Needs," a Sewer Board would be acting as a Dictator over the residents and taxpayers of Brown County.

First, in the May 1, 2013 Brown County Democrat, Mr. John Kennard stated: **Bean Blossom is an "environmental nightmare due to a large number of failed septic systems."**

On May 2, 2013, Mr. Kennard sent a letter to the County Sewer Board President, stating: **"These failed and challenged septic systems have been documented by the Brown County Health Department in a letter to the Commissioners."** Nothing was accomplished by the Sewer Board during this timeframe.

In 2016, the new President of BC Sewer Board requested a copy of the documents Mr. Kennard sent to the Commissioners, per his May 2, 2013 letter. Mr. Kennard never produced this documentation.

Therefore, on February 10, 2016, the President of the Sewer Board requested that Dr. Oestrike provide a copy of Mr. Kennard's documentation (per his May, 2, 2013 letter). Dr. Oestrike is responsible for Mr. Kennard- and Mr. Kennard reports to Dr. Oestrike.

On February 27, 2016, Mr. Oestrike responded by stating (email): **"No one in the Department is aware of any such report ever having been done by the Health Department. So, I doubt any such report exists."** Further, Dr. Oestrike stated: "I also checked with the Commissioners and they searched their files and could not find a copy of the letter, either."

Then, on March 8, 2017, in the Brown County Democrat, Mr. Kennard stated: **"the sewer board needs to get its act together,"** which is exactly what the new Sewer Board was doing.

After determining that No Documentation Existed to support Mr. Kennard's May 2, 2013 letter, the President of the Sewer Board requested the BC Health Department conduct a "Boots-On-The-Ground Survey" of the properties to be included in the proposed, new sewer system.

Dr. Oestrike responded that his Health Department did "not have the authority...to take on such projects--" despite the fact that his predecessor, Dr. Page, performed this exact process on Orchard Hill Drive, Orchard Hill Road, and on Coffee Hill.

The President of the Health Department Board then requested that the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) assist with this survey- which they had done many times for other sewer districts, at no cost to the county. Dr. Oestrike refused to agree to this process, because he feared that he could lose his medical license over this process. The ISDH responded that they knew of no one who had ever lost their medical license over this process- and "ISDH was 99.999999% sure that no one has lost a medical license over such a matter." Despite this fact, Dr. Oestrike and our Health Department refused to allow any Boots-On-The-Ground Survey to be conducted, and refused help from the ISDH to gather the facts needed to proceed with the proposed sewer project.

As a result, the Sewer Board had absolutely **Zero Evidence of Need** for a new sewer system in the Bean Blossom/ Fox Lake/Woodland Lake area.

Last, at the November 1, 2016 Sewer Board Meeting, Mr. Kennard was questioned about failed septic system documentation. His response was: "**As far as I know, there is none. We don't have a list- I'm telling you! If we find them, we will get them repaired. That's the way we work**" (41 minutes and 40 seconds into the meeting). Finally, an acknowledgement from Mr. Kennard, that he had lied about his documentation on failed septic systems in his May 2, 2013 letter to the Sewer Board President. In fact Mr. Kennard had No Proof of Need whatsoever, of failed septic systems.

The foregoing is a Clear, Documentation of the BC Health Department Not Doing Its Job, while trying to Bully the Sewer Board into installing a sewer system for which Zero "Proof of Need" had or ever has been established.

So, Whose Fooling Who? With the foregoing (documented) lies and deceit by our BC Health Department, they are in no position to propose a new County's Septic Ordinance that would deviate from, and be tougher than, that required by the State Laws of Indiana. Everything needed for Brown County's Septic Ordinance is already contained in State Code. It only needs to be adopted with provision for local permitting and enforcement.

Sincerely,
Jenny Lee Pittman
Brown County Commissioner