



# BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS

CITY OF HANNIBAL

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[www.hannibalbpw.org](http://www.hannibalbpw.org)

## ELECTRIC, WATER AND SEWER DEPARTMENTS

3 INDUSTRIAL LOOP DRIVE • PO BOX 1589 • HANNIBAL, MISSOURI 63401-1589

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### CHOICES HAVE CONSEQUENCES FOR HANNIBAL

Last week I explained how the Clean Water Act, written in 1974, impacts our community today with its ever increasing demands for water cleanliness and the skyrocketing costs to Hannibal residents for compliance. The increasing demands for cleanliness now, and in the future, will cost the ratepayers in Hannibal ever more money in water and sewer rates. There will be no relief to those increases until Congress changes the Law.

Are there choices for Hannibal? Here are the choices as I see them.

- Comply with the Law as it is written.
- Get the Law changed.
- Refuse or fail to comply with the Law.

Compliance with the Law is our duty as part of the Local Government System. I believe the HBPW is obligated to do all it can to meet these cleanliness standards. Within the first choice are some options to save money. We have some flexibility to delay or postpone compliance with certain parts of the law and we can choose among several technical options that may lower our costs of compliance. And, we have some financing options which, if used, could reduce some of the rate impacts. The fact that we can discharge our wastewater into the Mississippi River is a huge economic advantage to Hannibal. Other cities have much more stringent cleanliness requirements than we do because they discharge into smaller rivers or have pristine lakes close by.

If the Law were relaxed in certain ways it would be easier and cheaper for Hannibal to comply. We could postpone or reduce future rate increases. We have worked diligently with our Missouri legislators and U.S. Congress men and women to find ways the Law could be changed sensibly to reduce our financial burden and still have clean water. Reaction from our elected officials seems split along party lines. One group is supportive and would like to help but say they are powerless. The other side says they like the idea of tighter regulations and are not inclined to make changes to the Law. In my opinion, the Law will not be changed soon.

Some cities and counties across the country have taken the third choice, failing or refusing to comply with the Law. The results have not been pretty. All who have tried have ended up being sued by the EPA in Federal Court. All have lost and been directed by a federal judge to comply with the Law. In each case those who lost were forced by a judge into compliance measures that became more costly to finance than if they had voluntarily complied in the first place. Punishment was heaped upon those cities of 25% and even 50% higher costs so they would become examples to the rest of us. The Metropolitan Sewer District in St. Louis is only one example of this kind of treatment. I do not want to be responsible for Hannibal to fall into this situation.



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So, do we have choices? Yes, but not great ones. I believe some form of delayed compliance is in everybody's best interest. I believe we should always continue to work to get relief in the Law by changing it in smart ways. But, refusing to comply is not a real choice. It will only add to our costs in the long run. Over the next few weeks I will explain some of the details about what compliance will look like for our City. Then there will be a discussion about how we finance the work. Then there will be an election in August so the voters will have a chance to approve two bond issues.

What do you think? For more information and to see copies of previous guest columns please go to our website [www.hannibalbpw.org](http://www.hannibalbpw.org) or follow us on Facebook. Post your comments or send a letter to the editor of this paper.

PS: Since the recent storm outage our Facebook following has grown immensely. Keep up to date with HBPW news and comments found there.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Stevenson, P.E.  
General Manager

*"The mission of the Hannibal Board of Public Works is to provide safe, reliable utility products with excellent customer service at reasonable prices."*