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Photo by David Prenatt

Sherman Wastewater Treatment Plant Chief Operator Jay Irwin stands beside the dry well that contains the Direct Inline Pump installed in 2018.

Sherman Wastewater Treatment plant holds celebratory open house

By David Prenatt

editorial@westfieldrepublican.com

SHERMAN — The Village of Sherman Wastewater Treatment Plant Open House, which celebrated 40 years of public service and familiarized residents with plans for the future of the facility, was a success, just like the plant itself.

Upwards of 50 people attended the open house celebration of Sherman's Wastewater Treatment Plant on Friday, Sept. 6 and Saturday, Sept. 7.

Most were there for a special commemorative presentation, honoring former mayor, Edward Sprickman, and other village officials who served when the plant was constructed. A new sign at the entrance to the Wastewater Treatment Plant is dedicated to Mayor Sprickman, in honor of his leadership in building the facility.

Sherman Mayor Colleen Meeder said she was very pleased with the turnout for the presentation. "It was all about getting the discussion out there, and we definitely did that," Meeder said. "People were amazed at how cool this plant is."

Meeder emphasized that the treatment plant is a publicly-owned treatment works (POTW). "It's publicly-owned, this belongs to them. They have a right to know how it works," Meeder said. "I think it's helpful for them to understand the magnitude of what's happening here and all the people that are involved in making this happen."

Village Clerk Jeanette Ramm said the open house was a great success. "It was so nice because we had such

a great turnout of people who are interested in what's happening here," she said.

Ramm went on to say that she learned a great deal about the workings of the plant. "The thing that impressed me that most is that there is absolutely no smell," she said. "I guess there's no smell because they're doing things right here."

The village is in the process of obtaining grants for a \$6.2 million upgrade to the treatment facility. "The main problem is the failing infrastructure. It's kind of falling down on itself," said Chief Operator, Jay Irwin.

Irwin noted that the building is in great shape. "We don't need any upgrades to the building, except maybe an HVAC system," he said. "And the new direct inline pump (DIP) system has been in since January 2018, and we haven't needed to touch it."

At the commemorative presentation, Meeder said that the engineers who are planning the upgrades were impressed by the condition of the 40 year-old plant. She attributed this to the commitment of many village and county officials, who have contributed to the care of the plant through the years.

Meeder noted that Paul Fisher and Irwin have served as the only chief operators throughout the life of the plant. Both have won awards and have been recognized for excellence in their field, Meeder said.

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Submitted Photo

A new sign honoring former Sherman Mayor Edward Sprickman greets visitors to the wastewater treatment plant. From left to right are John Benson of Barton and LoGuidice, former wastewater plant chief operator Paul Fisher, Sherman Mayor Colleen Meeder, present chief operator Jay Irwin and County legislator Marty Proctor.

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Meeder also praised Mayor Sprickman and others who had the vision to build a plant 40 years ago. "What great insight and courage the board must have had about 50 years ago to begin the process of creating the Sherman Sewer District. I can't imagine it was a popular idea then," she said. "Those leaders did not build this for any benefit to themselves. They recognized the need for the community."

Water & Streets Superintendent, Doug Crane said larger municipalities were constructing sewer plants, but very few villages the size of Sherman took on the

construction of wastewater treatment facilities. "There was a big push in the 70's," he said. "Also, the federal government offered more grant money at that time."

Meeder said that, while the idea of celebrating a wastewater treatment plant may seem strange, it is actually a great way for people to gain an appreciation of something they generally take for granted. "Dwight Brown of the EFC calls it 'flush and forget' syndrome. For 40 years, this system has not failed, it has not been seen, talked of, or much thought about by the general community," she

said. "Some think this celebration is silly. We saw this as an opportunity to educate, but it is truly a celebration. The pride and care of commitment put into this otherwise thankless job is outstanding, and Paul and Jay were recognized just for those reasons."

Irwin said he is looking forward to the upgrades, which are expected to be completed by 2022. The system will be converted to a sequential batch reactor process, he said, which is an automated system. "We'll have totally new tanks. Essentially we're getting a new plant," Irwin said.