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Environmental Health Division

February 7, 2024

Rebecca N. Brumagin, Town of Mina Supervisor
PO Box 38
Findley Lake, NY 14736

RE: Findley Lake Public Sewer District - Onsite Wastewater Treatment System Inspections and Installations

To Whom It May Concern,

The Chautauqua County Health Department (CCHD) works diligently in our community to ensure the Public's Health and Safety. As part of those efforts to prevent disease, promote wellness, and protect the health of our community, our Environmental Health Division strives to ensure that the proper planning, installation, use, and repair of onsite wastewater treatment systems (septic systems) occurs in Chautauqua County.

The CCHD recognizes that the results of the public vote in Fall 2023 allows the Town of Mina to move forward with creating the public sewer district around Findley Lake with the goal of installing municipal sewer infrastructure. Provided the effort to establish a public sewer district and install appropriate infrastructure continues to move forward, the CCHD will support property owners within the district who will need to connect to the municipal sewer, while considering the public health concerns that result from inadequate onsite wastewater treatment systems.

Properties within the public sewer district that transfer ownership during this transitional period will be subject to sewage surveys. The CCHD will require an examination of wastewater plumbing connections, a visual inspection of the property following the addition of tracing dye to the wastewater system, and proof that the septic tank was pumped within the last three (3) years. If the CCHD has reason to suspect an onsite wastewater treatment system is in significant non-compliance with New York State standards and is causing an immediate public health hazard then the property owner may be required to uncover components.

When system components are uncovered, CCHD staff can determine if the system is causing an immediate public health hazard. The CCHD will work with property owners and contractors to determine an efficient way to address any immediate public health hazards until the structure is able to connect to public sewer infrastructure. Full onsite wastewater treatment system replacements will be avoided provided an appropriate alternative is available.

If an onsite wastewater treatment system is determined to be inadequate but does not appear to be causing an immediate public health hazard the system may be allowed to continue as is, provided the property owner connects to public sewer when the option is available. Holding tanks may be used at properties where a

public health hazard has been identified and must be addressed. Holding tanks will not be permitted for properties / structures where there is not currently a livable structure.

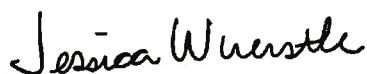
Following the public vote, CCHD staff discussed the use of Septic System Replacement funding with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation representatives who coordinate the Chautauqua County program. The funds will not be used to reimburse the costs of systems that have been installed previously. The funds are available to property owners should a full system replacement be required by CCHD between January 1, 2024 and the point of connection to municipal sewer infrastructure. However, the CCHD intends to work with property owners to find the most efficient correction for a system while being conscious of the upcoming costs regarding connecting to municipal sewer and abandoning existing onsite wastewater treatment components. Furthermore, the funds cannot be used to assist property owners with the costs associated with connecting to municipal sewer infrastructure and/or abandoning an existing septic system.

The CCHD supports the effort to establish a public sewer district and install municipal sewer infrastructure around Findley Lake. Therefore, the CCHD will assess our method of onsite wastewater treatment system evaluation and the types of corrections that will be required as the process continues. The CCHD appreciates that property owners will incur costs related to connecting to the municipal sewer infrastructure and abandoning existing onsite systems and does not wish to make the process more difficult for property owners to achieve the ultimate goal of connecting to municipal sewer infrastructure.

The CCHD has no intention of implementing the Mandatory Inspection Program around Findley Lake provided the efforts to establish the public sewer district and municipal sewer infrastructure continue. The CCHD will continue to investigate any public health nuisance complaints that we may receive regarding poorly functioning systems. Typically, we do not receive complaints around Findley Lake, but we will follow-up should complaints be received.

Should you have questions or concerns about how onsite wastewater treatment system inspections and installations will proceed during this transitional period, please contact me at 716-753-4763.

Sincerely,



Jessica Wuerstle
Director of Environmental Health

Cc: Marty Proctor, emailed