

MINUTES OF MEETING

MEETING OF THE MAYORS OF THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY TO
CONSIDER THE PURIFICATION OF THE WILLAMETTE RIVER AND THE
USE OF FEDERAL FUNDS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NECESSARY
PLANTS.

CALLED BY GOVERNOR JULIUS MEIER

The following delegates were present:

W. Y. Gray, Mayor of McMinnville
W. G. Rogers, Mayor of Newberg
Victor Chambers, Mayor of Cottage Grove
A. J. Darling, representing Mayor of Corvallis
Douglas McKay, Mayor of Salem
Elden M. Alldredge, Mayor of Gladstone
E. W. Garver, Silverton, Mayor
J. L. Franzen, City Manager, Oregon City
W. J. Dell, City Councilman, Milwaukie, representing Mayor
H. S. Rogers, Corvallis, Dean of Engineering
Ernest L. Crockett, Oregon State Game Commission
F. Merryfield, Oregon State College
William L. Finley, Jennings Lodge
John C. Veatch, State Fish Commission
W. C. Clubb, City Engineer, Eugene
W. S. Ewing, Oswego, Mayor
Robert W. Jones, McMinnville, City Engineer
Victor Oliver, Albany, City Engineer
Chris J. Kowitz, Salem, City Engineer
G. E. LaSalle, Gladstone, Councilman
E. C. Daggett, Gladstone, Councilman
Mayor George L. Baker, Portland, Oregon
Joseph K. Carson, Portland, Mayor elect
H. M. Rogers, Salem, City Engineer
Dr. Wm. Levin, Assistant St. Health Officer
David Robinson, Vice-chairman Anti-pollution Council
S. A. Hughes, Salem, Chairman Utilities Commission, City Council
R. A. McClanathan, Silverton, City Engineer
O. G. Porter, City Engineer, Milwaukie and West Linn
F. S. Perrine, Secretary Chamber of Commerce, Oregon City
Lewis N. Levy, Civic Emergency Federation
Fred J. Porter, City Engineer, Corvallis
Cameron Squires, Portland Chamber of Commerce
Frank M. Byam, Portland Chamber of Commerce
L. W. Coiner, Cottage Grove, City Engineer
W. T. Lambert, Chairman Stream Pollution Council, Portland
Dr. J. G. Abole, City Health Officer, Portland
Walter E. Baer, Consulting Engineer, representing Pollution Council

The meeting was called to order by Governor Meier at
10:00 a.m., Thursday, June 1, in the Assembly Room at the

Multnomah Hotel. Governor Meier's introductory remarks were as follows:

"Since the beginning of the construction of sewers, several centuries ago, the common method has been to discharge sewage into nearby water courses. As population increased, with a corresponding increase in the quantity of sewage, this practice became dangerous to public health and to fish life, and developed into a general nuisance. It has now become necessary to develop methods of artificial treatment to assist the forces of nature.

It is evident to anyone who is familiar with the waters of the Willamette River and who has studied the results of the sanitary survey made in 1929 by Dean H. S. Rogers of the Oregon State College, G. M. Lockmore and C. D. Adams, that the practice of discharging raw sewage into the Willamette River and its tributaries has reached a point where it is dangerous to public health, and presents a condition which must be corrected.

The Willamette is one of the most beautiful streams of the West. Its beauty and its purity should be safeguarded as great natural assets. It should afford not only a practical advantage but a delightful playground for the communities through which it flows. People should seek it out for boating, fishing and bathing. Property adjacent to the stream should be at a premium for building sites. Unfortunately, this is not always true, because of unpleasant and unsanitary conditions connected with the disposal of waste and sewage.

The correction of these conditions will require the construction of sewage treatment plants by the cities now using the Willamette River or its tributaries to dispose of their sewage.

The next question is how these projects are to be financed, in view of the fact that the treasuries of many of these cities are so low that it is hard to meet operating expenses and it is impossible to finance the construction by the sale of bonds.

Chapter 289, Laws of Oregon for 1933, authorizes municipalities to acquire and operate sewage systems and disposal plants, and to collect equitable rates for the use of such facilities. This places such projects on a self-liquidating basis and makes them eligible for loans from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.

Furthermore, the public works bill now pending in Congress provides for a grant to municipalities of as much as thirty per cent of the cost of labor and material employed in the construction of public works, and makes available loans for the remaining seventy percent of the cost.

If a plan for the construction of sewage disposal plants for those cities now discharging raw sewage into the Willamette and its tributaries can be developed and carried through to completion, it will not only be beneficial to the public health, protect fish life and clear up a general nuisance, but will aid materially in relieving our unemployment problem.

It is to give consideration to the development of such a program that I have asked you gentlemen to confer with me this morning."

The Governor then turned the meeting over to Vice-chairman Raymond B. Wilcox of the Reconstruction Advisory Board as acting chairman of the meeting. Mr. Wilcox called upon Dr. Levin, State Health Officer, for a discussion of the purification of the Willamette River as a health measure. The substance of Mr. Levin's talk is as follows:

"The consideration of the pollution of the Willamette River is not a local question, but is one which the entire state must consider. It is of vital importance to the entire Willamette Valley as a group. Dr. Levin gave statistics of the extent of the bacteria count in the water at various points along the Willamette which clearly showed the effect of the dumping of raw sewage into the river, and indicated a possibility of a serious health problem arising from such practice. He stated that 75% of the wells in the Willamette Valley show indication of having been polluted from some outside source, which doubtless was due in part to contamination of the river. He further stated that the purification of the river must be undertaken within the near future and that laws are now provided for the enforcement of such purification.

Acting chairman Wilcox next called on Mr. John Veatch, chairman of the State Fish Commission, who stated in substance that fishing is one of Oregon's greatest industries and supplies millions of dollars in payroll toward Oregon's prosperity. He stated that whereas it is true that the fish are caught commercially in the Columbia River, nevertheless the Willamette and its tributaries are the principal natural spawning grounds of such fish and that if the Willamette were cut off from use by fish as a spawning ground the Columbia would cease to have its regular runs of salmon. He stated that the Willamette has nearly reached its saturation point in raw sewage, after which it will be impossible for fish life to survive in it. This condition would be similar to that which occurred in the Hudson River, where, through the use of the river as an open dumping ground, the state of New York lost an approximately \$9,000,000 shad industry.

Mr. Wilcox next called upon Mr. Ernest Crockett, representing the State Game Commission, who spoke to the following effect: The Game Commission is as interested in the salmon run on the Columbia and Willamette as the Fish Commission is, and it is the duty of the commission to take such measures as are available for the preservation of such industry. Under the laws of 1931, Chapter 370, Paragraph 52, the Game Commission may force industries and municipalities to purify the streams in which game fish live. However, up to this time the Commission has recognized the fact that such measures would place a heavy burden on taxation and so have been hesitant in taking the measures which they believe it would otherwise be their duty to take. He declared that it has been determined by competent authorities on fish pathology that industrial and municipal wastes do directly poison fish life in the Willamette and that at certain times of year, during low water, trout and other sensitive game fish cannot live in that river. It is only a short time until the same condition will exist in regard to salmon. He finished by declaring that it was the duty of the Oregon State Commission to insist that immediate steps be taken.

Acting chairman Wilcox then called upon Mr. William Finley, nationally known naturalist and lecturer on Oregon as a recreational center. Mr. Finley declared that the Pacific Northwest is America's greatest playground and that the rivers are our greatest resources for recreation. He protested the deplorable condition of the Willamette River which has resulted from the dumping of sewage therein and described his own experience with tourists who have been disgusted with the conditions they have found. He cited concrete incidents of actual destruction of private property by such practice and further treated the question as a menace to health and a destruction to fish life. He warned the Mayors that the Willamette River would soon be in the position of the East River in New York where a great fish industry has been completely stopped because of the condition of that river.

Mr. Robert Dieck was next asked to speak from the engineering viewpoint. He stressed the importance of the state taking over the study of this matter and the obtaining of competent engineering advice upon it. He urged that a board of engineers be appointed who should report upon the advisability and the ability of the communities to immediately pursue this work.

Mr. Charles Stricklin, State Engineer, next urged the immediate consummation of this work and stated that it is not a local problem but one in which all of the states are now vitally interested and are rapidly becoming cognizant of the method of properly handling their sewage matter.

Mr. Wilcox then called for expression by the various Mayors of the cities as to their views on this matter.

Mayor George L. Baker of the City of Portland declared that this was not a new problem but had been given careful consideration for over seven years. He declared that the elimination of pollution in the Willamette and its tributaries is an outstanding necessity at this time and should be carried out immediately. He called upon the entire state for co-operation in this matter and warned that it would require a solid front in order to get the project through. In part he said that for the first time a chance was offered to relieve the general taxpayer of the burden and that with this method open, time should not be lost in the preparation of the necessary data. "Gentlemen", he declared, "God has been very kind to the people of the State of Oregon. Our great outdoors is unequalled any place in the world. This is the time for action. We know the remedy, we know the benefits, get out engineers to work and lets do the job".

Mayor-elect Carson of the City of Portland said that the Columbia is the largest clear water stream in the United States and the Willamette is the second largest. That the keeping of these rivers clear of pollution is a matter of national concern. We must go forward with this problem and make the Pacific Northwest the greatest playground of America. He ended by pledging his support and declared that he would do everything within his power to further the program.

Mayor Gray of McMinnville, when called upon, said that there would be no trouble getting McMinnville to co-operate and further declared that they were ready to go immediately.

Mayor Rogers of Newberg declared that the council favored the plan and that in his view the matter was now largely one of the education of the people as to the necessity for the work.

Mayor Chambers of Cottage Grove stated that he was sure Cottage Grove was in favor of anything that they could do to further the program. He mentioned, however, that finances might prove their only obstacle.

Mayor Douglas McKay of Salem said that the city of Salem had been interested in this work for some time. He declared himself heartily in favor with the program and that financing it was the only drawback he knew of.

David Robinson, Vice-chairman of the Stream Pollution Council of Oregon, was next recognized by the Chair and gave a general discussion covering the necessity and advisability of doing the work immediately. He spoke of the size of the organization, and pledged the support of this group to any program pointing toward the solution of the problem.

Mr. A. J. Darling, official representative of the Mayor

of Corvallis, declared that Corvallis was heartily in sympathy with the project. He declared that they were greatly interested in the financial means by which this work could be carried out.

Mayor Alldredge of Gladstone said Gladstone would cooperate to the utmost.

Mayor Garver of Silverton said that as far as he knew at the present time Silverton would fall in line with the other cities of the valley and that he was satisfied that everybody would be willing to help out.

Commissioner Dell of Milwaukie, representing the Mayor of that City, said that they would cooperate in the program.

City Manager Franzen of Oregon City declared that due to the indisposition of the Mayor of Oregon City, the matter had not been discussed officially by the City Commission. He did say, however, that he believed that Oregon City would not object; that it would be in favor of the project, with the only possible obstacle being that of financing it. He called to the attention of the Mayors the fact that Oregon City has the most difficult engineering problem of any city on the Willamette and because of the necessity of hewing from solid rock all necessary excavations, the project would doubtless prove a very expensive one to Oregon City. He further declared that if it were within the financial reach of the people of the city he felt sure that Oregon City would construct their part of the project.

Mr. John H. Lewis, local consulting engineer, was next recognized by the Chair, and discussed the market for cheap power which such treatment would open up.

Dean Rogers, head of engineering at Oregon State College and author of the report concerning the pollution of the Willamette River published some years back, was next called upon by the Chair and discussed from an engineering viewpoint the advisability of going ahead at the present time and touched upon the engineering problems which would be involved in the preparation and starting of such a widely extended project.

Harry L. Gross, Portland attorney, next declared that it would be, as he saw it, the most available method of relieving a civic emergency as to employment existing in Portland. He stated that he did not feel the matter of financing this project was as serious as many at the meeting might feel in that the benefits derived not only from the purification from the river but also from the relieving of unemployment, would far outweigh any expense which might be entailed.

City Engineer Clubb of Eugene, representing the Mayor of that city, said that as far as Eugene is concerned, they are probably in as good shape to go ahead with this project as any city on the Willamette. The chief question at this time in his mind was a publicity matter of obtaining the support of the people of Eugene behind the project.

Mr. A. C. Forrester, sanitary engineer, gave a short discussion on possible by-products derived from such project, such as fertilizer, which might serve to partly liquidate the work.

Mr. Walter E. Baer, consulting engineer, declared that the matter was for every individual community of the Willamette Valley to consider and to prepare and for each community to start developing their own projects for the obtaining of money from the RFC.

City Engineer Laurgaard of Portland suggested an organized action under a league of Mayors that should go on record as favoring the erection of sewage disposal plants in the Willamette Valley and that this organization at the same time should urge that the responsible authorities in the various communities should act immediately.

Mr. Marshall Dana of the Oregon Journal expressed apprehension as to the public effect that this matter would have upon the public. He warned against any vagueness as to action on the part of the group and declared that the public would be likely to accept such vagueness as evasion and done for the purpose of delay. He agreed that the purification of the Willamette is an absolute necessity, is a proper project which should be consummated at this time, and that anything that might endanger its fulfillment would be unthinkable.

Mr. F. Merryfield next presented a resolution for consideration of the meeting, which resolution was seconded by Mr. Forrester. Mr. Gross and Mr. Laurgaard offered minor amendments to such resolution and full discussion followed.

Commissioner Dell of Milwaukie called for the question, declaring that the meeting should cease discussions on the matter and let the Reconstruction Advisory Board proceed to develop the program. A vote was called upon the resolution as amended and so amended, the resolution passes unanimously by the assembly. The resolution, as passed, is as follows:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS the pollution of the Willamette River is rapid-

ly approaching a time when it will become a menace to the health of the communities along its bank and the Willamette River is in danger of having its fish life destroyed and has already ceased to be the recreational center which its natural beauty entitles it, and

WHEREAS because of such conditions, the communities along the Willamette are threatened with the loss of the value of their position on the River and because of their practice of converting the River into an open sewer are liable to court action for creating a nuisance, and

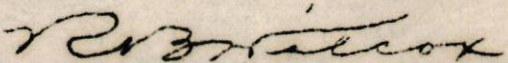
WHEREAS the Federal Government is providing by the National Industrial Recovery Act large sums of money to be granted and/or loaned to the various States and Municipalities for public projects which sums should be taken advantage of in the interest of the development of Oregon and the relief of local unemployment, and

WHEREAS the treatment of the sewage emptying into the Willamette River is of utmost public importance and will provide a maximum amount of labor per unit cost dollar,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayors of the cities and towns of the Willamette Valley herein convened, that the following steps be taken:

1. That the Reconstruction Advisory Board of the State of Oregon be requested to appoint a Board of three capable engineers to make a brief survey of the situation along the Willamette River and to bring in their recommendations as to the degree of purification which ought to be sought so that there might be uniformity of action between the various communities, and further a consideration of the most equitable and fair manner of treating the industrial wastage so as to create no undue burden on present or future industries.
2. That each city or town be prepared to offer the Engineer's Committee every facility to aid in a rapid presentation of the report, and to this end will direct their own agencies within their city towards the immediate compilation of the necessary data.
3. That independent of the action of the Governor's Committee that each municipality be urged to take steps on its own account to further the plans within its own confines.

Motion was then made for the adjournment of the meeting, which was passed, and the meeting adjourned at 12:15 P.M.



Acting Chairman