FROM PAGE 1

Vogt described the present water situation as near critical. He said that if we have another drought this summer, conservation measures would be needed. People, he said, might be asked to curtail watering their lawns on certain days.

Growth of Lawrence was the main reason for the construction of the new $10 million sewage treatment plant which will boost sewer rates by 50 per cent in 1977, increasing the $3 per month average sewage charge to $4.50.

The recent fuss about sanitation services are due, in large part, to the growth of the city. The City has been considering switching to private trash collection, and with this change, the $3 per month trash collection charge, one of the lowest in Kansas, will surely rise.

Lawrence residents are paying for growth. What's more, they will be forced to subsidize future growth. Although it's the new suburbanites who are creating the need for the Clinton plant, all residents will have to pay for it. The plant, planned for Dragstrip Road, just west of the City limits, will pump water only for residents of the southern and western parts of Lawrence. In emergency, the plant could be used to back-up the entire system, but it will do nothing to improve service to old customers.

One of the City's biggest worries is that the Army Corp of Engineers may cut off water in the Kaw River for reservoirs to the northwest of Lawrence, Vogt said.

"If we have droughts, we're not so sure we'll have water running down the Kaw," he said. "The Corp could hold back on the water to maintain Perry, Tuttle Creek and Milford."

Vogt said we need a second water source because the City of Lawrence would have no power to stop such drastic action by the Corp.

If Lawrence really does need a second source of water, the new Clinton Reservoir wouldn't provide immediate relief since water wouldn't be available until at least 1979. With severe droughts, water impoundment will take much longer.

Building a new water plant to boost water output by nearly 60 per cent will cause growth of the city. What is the price of continued fast-paced growth in Lawrence? Who should pay for the resulting increased demands for City services? Should the City promote growth?

The Chamber of Commerce will readily argue that the more people, the larger the tax base. But population increase also means increased demand for City services--water, sewer, sanitation, police, fire and street improvements.

Residents in neighborhoods located at elevations under 900 feet, have lower water pressure and often complain that water pressure is dangerously low in case of fire. The new water plant won't increase pressure.

As with many decisions which affect the direction of the city, the City Commissioners aren't asking the people what they want.

Commissioners voted unanimously in November to ask voters to approve general obligation bond financing to build the new plant. The question, appearing on the Spring election ballot, is not whether to build the plant, but merely how to pay for it. Commissioners are convinced the plant must be built. If voters turn down general obligation bond financing, the City plans to build the plant with revenue bonds, according to City Commissioners, which do not require voter approval.

The City is promoting a yes vote on the financing question. According to the City's engineering consultants' estimates, financing the plant with g.o. bonds could save the City $5 million in interest charges because the bonds would be payed off in 20 years as opposed to 30 years with the revenue bonds.

As Mayor Fred Pence put it, "On the ballot you just ask one question--'Would you like to save $5 million?'"

But g.o. bonds won't save customers on their water bills. (See Box) Based on consultants' estimates, a $10 water bill will soar to $24 in 1981 if g.o. bonds are used. With revenue bonds, that same $10 bill would cost $21 in 1981.

Vogt said the water department wouldn't save any money with the use of g.o. bonds for the first 20 years. After that, he said, it might be possible to lower water rates.

Vogt supports g.o. bond financing because he says the new plant could be built sooner and the City would be in a better position to obtain financing in 20 years if the city continues to grow.

Voter approval of g.o. bonds would allow construction to begin this summer. A no vote would delay construction two years. Vogt said that because of the water shortage, voters should be willing to pay more to get the plant sooner.

The new water plant is an important project affecting the whole community. Commissioners should give careful thought to the long-range effects of their decision. They should evaluate the needs of the community and encourage an open debate on whether promotion of growth is really "progress" and who benefits and who is hurt by such growth. Construction of the water plant isn't the only answer.

> "THE PICTURESQUE LAWRENCE WE KNOW WOULD DISAPPEAR. THE CITY WOULD BECOME LIKE ONE OF THOSE DESERT TOWNS IN ARIZONA. ARCHITECTS WOULD START LANDSCAPING MUCH DIFFERENTLY. THEY'D START PUTTING THOSE PAINTED ROCKS IN FRONT YARDS."
>
> --Gene Vogt, Lawrence utilities director on water conservation as an alternative to construction of the new water treatment plant.

NEW RATES BASED ON A $10 WATER BILL--SCHEDULED TO BEGIN IN APRIL

With the use of general obligation bonds:

1976	$10 per month	$120 per year	
1977	$12.10 per month	$145 per year	21% increase
1978	$15.50 per month	$186 per year	28% increase
1979	$18.90 per month	$226 per year	22% increase
1980	$22.90 per month	$272 per year	19% increase
1981	$24.32 per month	$291 per year	6% increase
			106% TOTAL

With the use of revenue bonds:

1976	$10 per month	$120 per year	
1977	$15 per month	$150 per year	50% increase
1978	$17.90 per month	$214 per year	19% increase
1979-1980	SAME	SAME	NO INCREASE
1981	$21.30 per month	$255 per year	19% increase
			88% TOTAL

General obligation bonds require the approval of voters and would be backed by revenues generated by the water department and guaranteed by the City. G. O. bonds would be payed back in 20 years, revenue bonds in 30 years. Statistics provided by Gene Vogt, utilities director.

Current Water Rates:

2,000 gallons	$2 called the minimum base charge
18,000	70 cents per 1,000 or $12.60
80,000	50 cents per 1,000 or $40.00
400,000	30 cents per 1,000 or $120.00
Over 500,000	25 cents per 1,000

Courtesy of City Water Department

PUBLIC NOTICE supports a plan to conserve water, making the new plant unnecessary. We support the East Lawrence Improvement Association's decision to recommend adoption of life-line rates to encourage conservation.

Life-line rates charge a basic low-rate for a minimum amount of water for essentials. Excessive use beyond this amount would cost more. The more water used, the higher the cost per gallon.

Under the present water rate system, the more water used, the cheaper the rate (See Box). Thus, waste is not only acceptable, it is encouraged.

The life-line system would provide affordable water for all. Wasteful consumption would be discouraged. Those who are placing heavy demands on the water system should pay for any additional water service costs. Why should people who use a minimal amount of water for washing, cooking and drinking pay more because new home owners want to irrigate lush golf course size lawns or because the City wants to promote industrial and residential growth?

Let the developers fend for themselves. Let's take care of the existing city. Conservation is the key, not only in Lawrence and not just with water use, but in the whole country and with all precious natural resources.

The first step in curtailing higher water costs and the resulting growth is for voters to vote no on the finance question in the spring. Citizens should request that the Commission adopt a plan to conserve water. Most importantly, Commissioners should ask the people what they want. If the Commission refuses to stage an open debate and explore conservation, the people should petition for a referendum vote on whether to build the plant.

Merely asking voter approval of a financing method for a project without an open discussion of real needs, is irresponsible and undemocratic governing.

Just who will profit and prosper with 100,000 people in Lawrence? Who will pay the costs? City Hall is supposed to represent the people. Let's give the voters the chance to decide the future of their city.

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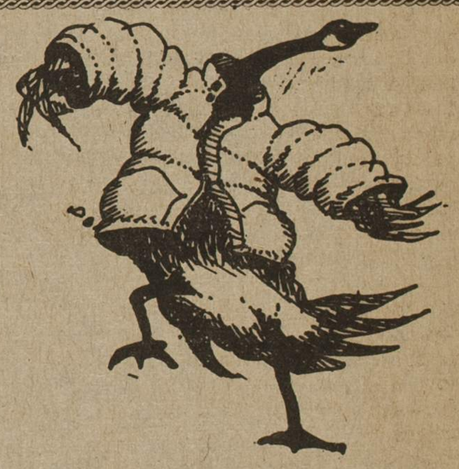

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