

Village of Elsie Council Meeting Minutes
Proposed Drinking Water Improvements Project
Public Hearing
May 12, 2026
7:00 PM

President Jason Freeman called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Members Present: President Jason Freeman; Council Members: Dorothy Ornelas, Mark Helt, Sam Frink, Joe Ondrusek Todd Carroll, Kory Witt.

Ex-Officios: Present: Village Manager/Police Chief Destinee Bryce, DPW Supervisor Chris Ormes, Clerk/Treasurer Kelsey Kelly.

The stated purpose of the hearing was to present the need for the project, alternatives considered, associated costs, and available funding mechanisms — specifically eligibility for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF). This presentation was delivered by Elaine Venema, Project Manager at Fleis & Vandenbrink Engineering, and Cavanaugh Doud, Engineer-in-Training at Fleis & Vandenbrink Engineering.

The presentation covered existing conditions, noting that a large portion of the Village's water mains date back to 1936–1937, are cast iron, well past their useful life, and have experienced significant tuberculation, meaning the inside diameter has shrunk and capacity has gone way down. Well Number 1 is also in poor shape and recommended for retirement. Naturally high iron levels in the groundwater are causing visual water quality issues such as color, off taste, and odor. The current chemical sequestration treatment is not adequate for the iron concentrations.

Four alternatives were evaluated: (A) no action, (B) optimize the existing system, (C) regionalization by connecting to Ovid's water supply, and (D) construct the necessary improvements. Alternatives A and B were set aside as they don't meet project goals. Regionalization via Ovid would require over six miles of transmission main and at least one booster station, running \$6–8 million before even touching the distribution system. Alternative D includes replacing and upsizing approximately one and a half miles of undersized four-inch cast iron water mains on East Main Street, South Ovid Street, and North Ovid Street; looping dead ends on Simonson and White Streets; drilling a new well near the existing wellfield; constructing a new iron removal plant to treat all three wells; and making some improvements to the elevated storage tank, including adding a mixer to keep the water turning over. Total project cost is estimated at \$9.23 million.

The Village narrowly missed qualifying as an "overburdened" community, coming in just \$1,018 per year over the threshold. This means principal forgiveness or grant funding through DWSRF is unlikely this cycle, and the package would likely be loan-only. The estimated customer rate impact for the full project scope is approximately \$87 per month. The Council noted that a reduced scope focusing on the most urgent items could bring that number down. Additional funding avenues being pursued include USDA Rural Development (which offers a 40-year loan term and a slightly different poverty calculation), community project funding requests submitted to U.S. Senators Slotkin and Peters, and potential funding if an industrial user can be attracted to the Village.

Council discussed the need to acquire a small parcel of farmland adjacent to the existing wellfield to accommodate the new well and iron removal plant. Members also noted the immediate visible benefit the iron removal plant would have for residents in terms of water taste, color, and smell, and highlighted that the Village's aging mains have already led to real firefighting capacity problems. Public comment period opened and closed with no participants.

M. Helt moved to adjourn the Proposed Drinking Water Improvements Project Public Hearing, K. Witt seconded. MOTION CARRIED.

Kelsey Kelly
Village Clerk/Treasurer

Jason Freeman
Village President