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Water System Merger of West Lafayette and Coshocton

The conversation to merge water systems in Coshocton and West Lafayette dates back nearly three decades. With impeding system upgrade costs and maintenance, rate increases impacting both communities, and an increased focus on regionalization at the state level, shared services become the solution for these two communities.

Coshocton

In a position for expansion due to:
- Excess capacity due to simultaneous water system expansion and loss of industry
- Recent rate increases to residents to offset industry loss
- An established regional supplier for Coshocton County

West Lafayette

Impeding monetary and environmental issues facing water system:
- Contaminated plume found, with potential impact on water system
- Near future upgrades and maintenance for an aging water system
- Near future increases in water rates to residents to offset operation costs
- Substandard lines below the EPA requirements in need of replacement

The Process: Through a casual conversation between community leaders, the idea to share services blossomed in 2018. Each council needed to approve the community in entering into negotiations – this was easily garnered in Coshocton, while West Lafayette’s council was split. West Lafayette took the idea to its residents, who approved council to enter into negotiations. Each community created a water negotiation team, and utilized the resources, data, and guidance from third-parties, such as Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) and Small Communities Environmental Infrastructure Group (SCEIG). In the end, the negotiating teams established a shared services agreement that was approved by both councils. The terms of the agreement include:

- Coshocton will take over West Lafayette’s water system through new connection lines. Coshocton will replace substandard lines in West Lafayette.
- The establishment of a Water Advisory Committee, with representation from both communities. The purpose of the Committee is to advise the city on water improvements and rates.
- Coshocton will assume the responsibility for funding the project

Project Advantages: both communities will see water rate stabilization through economics of scale; both communities will have safer, cheaper water, and greater opportunity for economic development; the environmental and monetary concerns facing West Lafayette will be mitigated; Coshocton will be positioned as a regional supplier of water.

The terms of the shared services agreement have been approved as of April 2019, with the funding acquisition underway.