



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

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County Board approves new septic rules

The St. Louis County Board has approved the new Ordinance 61, which establishes rules to ensure septic systems in the county comply with state requirements and protect groundwater. The 5-1 vote came following a public hearing during its regular Board meeting, held in Hibbing today.

The new ordinance, which has been in the works for years, strikes a balance of satisfying new state requirements while providing increased flexibility to home owners. Officially known as Subsurface Sewage Treatment System Ordinance 61, the new rules remove provisions better addressed in the County's zoning ordinances, broaden the use of holding tanks, modify point of sale program requirements, and incorporate local system design considerations.

Regarding point of sale requirements, the Board supported the implementation of an escrow requirement effective June 30, 2014. This helps ensure that upgrades are made to systems that may not be compliant. The rest of the ordinance is effective immediately with the exception of property transfers to immediate family members, which was deferred for five years.

The county last updated its septic regulations in 2008. In recent years, county staff has spent considerable time working with state-licensed septic designers, inspectors, installers and maintainers, and other interested parties to update the ordinance to reflect changes in state law while incorporating local considerations.

“Our focus is to be responsive to our constituents while protecting our ground waters,” said

Board Chair Mike Forsman.”It is notable that, on balance, there was little controversy over the ordinance with the exception of some concerns of the impacts of escrow on home sales. But the Board wanted to ensure and be consistent with respect to protecting public health.”

“It’s the right thing to do,” added Commissioner Keith Nelson, who chaired the Septic Subcommittee. “We are doing what is right for our environment in St. Louis County. If we look at the long haul, preserving property values will depend on preserving the quality of the ground water.”

The new ordinance, as well as answers to frequently asked questions about it, can be read online at stlouiscountymn.gov/ordinance61. Additional questions should be directed to the Environmental Services Department at (218) 749-0625 or 1-800-450-9278, or e-mail, esdinfo@stlouiscountymn.gov.

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