

By Angie Mayes

As La Vergne grew, so did the need for utilities. At first land owners had private wells and septic systems on their land, providing them with the basic needs. The telephone was the first to come to town, followed by electricity. Water service was noted as a main reason for attempting to incorporate. Sewer came after incorporation.

## WATER

Before the 1972 incorporation, voters rejected a city incorporation measure in 1961, 90-176.

At the time, 90 percent of the well water in the city would not pass the state's fluoride tests given by the state health department. Residents often had to boil their water before they drank it.

"Our main purpose for attempting to incorporate La Vergne was to provide filtered water to the area," A.B. Cox, president of the Men's Club at the time, stated after the vote.

Another reason for the incorporation was the need for fire fighting equipment. Without adequate fire fighting equipment to save it, the administration building at the Farmer's Co-op had burned to the ground in 1960.

Despite the failure of the vote, La Vergne leaders formed the La Vergne Utility District (LUD), the only measure offered to the citizens for the installation of a water system. At that time, the estimated cost was \$30,000 plus interest. There were 475 potential customers.

"Since the city voted against incorporation, this utility district is the only practical avenue open to the community at this time," the Courier stated. When the measure came to vote, nearly 70 percent voted in favor of the LUD.

By 1963, the city had deposits from 900 potential customers. The availability of water helped make the city the fastest growing community in Middle Tennessee. They had the largest amount of water lines of any similar size city in the state. More than 100,000 feet of water lines from Smyrna (the utility La Vergne bought their water from) to almost every part of La Vergne was laid.

Various problems occurred between La Vergne and Smyrna's Utility Department over the years and in 1983, the state acted on a new La Vergne water agreement. The city was to buy 50 percent of their water from Nashville and 50 percent from Smyrna. Because Smyrna had said that La Vergne had not "lived up to their agreement" the utility placed a surcharge on La Vergne for five million gallons of water at \$2,400 per month, whether or not it was used.

Due to that, the water rates increased in 1984. In addition, they again increased in 1987 because Metro had increased their water fee. The rate increases and problems with the various utilities forced city leaders to begin studying the feasibility of a water plant in La Vergne. By 1988, the city announced plans to build the water plant which cost \$4.45 million to get "off the hook with Metro."

Over 10 acres were bought near Percy Priest Lake in August, 1988 for the plant, and in 1992, La Vergne received a \$500,000 block grant to assist in the upgrading of water lines in the city. Nearly 47,000 linear feet of lines and fire hydrants were to be installed throughout the city.

The plant opened in 1993, offering 3.75 million gallons of water per day storage capacity in tanks and a four million gallons per day in house capacity.

Later this month, a new water storage tank on Sanford Knob will be incorporated into the water system. The tank will provide water for the homes and businesses to the west of I-24. In La Vergne, a tank was opened on Sanders Drive, to the east of I-24.

#### WILL THIS BE ENOUGH?

In 1997, La Vergne's Water Treatment Plant was named the best in the state because of its stringent testing policies require that the plant operators check the water every two hours daily and report to the state each month. The State of Tennessee takes samples from the water to ensure that the water levels are acceptable and within the stated guidelines.

Current rates are:

Hook Up Fee: Residential, \$50 (non refundable)

Commercial/Industrial, \$75 (non refundable)

Rates: Residential, first 2,000 gallons - \$8.50, each additional 1,000 gallons - \$2.20.

Commercial, first 2,000 gallons - \$11, each additional 1,000 gallons - \$2.50.

Industrial, first 2,000 gallons - \$200, each additional 1,000 gallons - \$3.35.

#### SEWER

In 1966, the LUD planned to establish a sewage disposal system to serve the 900 members of the district. Cost for the system was estimated at \$1.6 million, half of which was available from the FHHFA. The balance was to be financed by members of the LUD.

The argument for a sewage disposal system was to "encourage the location of industry, to increase the present value of the homes, to attract more residents, to generally increase business, contribute to the long range community planning and to improve health conditions," wrote The Courier.

In 1983, La Vergne received \$688,000 from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to build main trunk lines and a pump station for a sewer system. The \$1.2 million project sent La Vergne's sewage to Nashville's Hurricane Creek plant for treatment.

In January 1985, the sewer plan was changed to replace the line size. La Vergne was in line for a \$2.1 million grant from the EPA for phase two of the sewer system.

The city applied for funds in 1985, stating construction would begin in 1986 and be finished by 1988. The city received the sewer grant (between \$1 - 2.9 million) in 1986. By August of 1987, over 1,000 had paid the \$1,000 tap fees for the new sewer system.

Although city leaders would like for La Vergne to have its own sewer plant, current indications are that one will not be built in the near future.

Current rates are:

Residential, first 2,000 gallons - \$10.20, each additional 1,000 gallons - \$2.64.

Commercial, first 2,000 gallons - \$13.20, each additional 1,000 gallons - \$3.00

Industrial, first 2,000 gallons, \$240.00, each additional 1,000 gallons - \$3.35.

#### ELECTRICITY

Life was slow in La Vergne after World War I. When O.B. Tucker Sr. built his house in 1921, there was no hope of electricity. The closest power lines were in Una, nine miles toward Nashville. Tucker began talking with the Nashville Railway and Light Company in an attempt to bring electricity to La Vergne. The Company told Tucker he must secure 240 customers who would pay a \$3 tie-in charge.

Only 30 - 40 signed initially up. Many felt that the venture was impractical, some were afraid of the dangers of electricity running through their home while others dismissed the idea as economically unsound.

After a year, only 180 had signed up. Nashville Railway and Light Company refused to extend the lines. Tucker bargained with them, offering to bring in the utility poles from his West Tennessee business. (They paid him \$1 per pole, they were worth \$14 per pole.)

Finally, by 1923, La Vergne residents finally had electricity.

#### PHONE SERVICE

Although the first phone was installed in La Vergne in 1904 by Thomas Mason (and the phone Co-Op was established in 1913), toll-free service to other areas such as Smyrna and Murfreesboro wasn't available until much later. In December 1968, calls to Smyrna were no longer long distance. In 1989, the calls to Murfreesboro were finally free. Not until Jan. 1973 did a direct line from the La Vergne Police Department to the Rutherford County Sheriff's Office exist.

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