

# Whitefish studies sewer options for Lion Mountain

By LYNNETTE HINTZE/ Daily Inter Lake | Posted: Monday, April 4, 2016 9:15 am

A preliminary engineering report that outlines septic and sewer alternatives for Lion Mountain and possible incentives for utility connection and annexation is the focus of a Whitefish City Council work session tonight.

The work session begins at 5:30 p.m. at the interim City Hall at 1005 Baker Ave. in Whitefish; no formal decisions will be made during the session.

The council's discussion comes on the heels of a recommendation in the engineering report that Lion Mountain property owners should abandon their septic systems and hook up to city sewer to preserve water quality in Whitefish Lake and the subdivision's drinking water.

Research from Whitefish Lake Institute indicates that while Whitefish Lake is considered safe, pollution has been detected in Dog Bay near Whitefish Lake State Park where groundwater from Lion Mountain seeps into the lake. The majority of homes on Lion Mountain use septic systems.

Whitefish Lake Institute worked with Carver Engineering last year to study and propose remedies for the septic leachate issues. The report indicated elevated levels of nitrate have been detected in Lion Mountain's drinking water, likely the result of wastewater seeping into underground fractures.

Carver's report recommends extending the Whitefish city sewer system to serve all homes on Lion Mountain as the preferred alternative to address the problem. It's an expensive proposition, pegged at close to \$3 million in capital costs to connect the subdivision to city sewer, plus annual operating and maintenance costs of close to \$87,000.

While the report addresses five neighborhoods near Whitefish Lake, the current issue at hand encompasses the Lion Mountain neighborhood. Whitefish Lake Institute has advised that systems or policies developed for the Lion Mountain project should be applicable to the other four neighborhoods to increase management and funding efficiencies.

"We advise the city of Whitefish use the Lion Mountain neighborhood to develop a new methodology for handling wastewater management services around Whitefish Lake via a fee for services agreement as opposed to annexation," the institute advised in a March 28 letter to the council.

Other neighborhoods in the study included East Lakeshore, Lazy Bay, Viking Creek and Point of Pines.

At the regular council meeting that begins at 7:10 p.m. the council will get an update on construction progress of the new City Hall and parking structure. There also will be discussion and possible direction on options for leased parking in the structure.

The Whitefish Convention and Visitor Bureau will give its annual presentation for council approval of the bureau's marketing plan.

The council will consider approving a request for qualifications process for a housing needs assessment proposed by the Whitefish Chamber of Commerce.