

Back in the late 60s early 70s there was a school known as the Fosterburg Elementary School. There were several parents concerned over not only quantity, but the quality of water available for the school as well. The school was fed by a shallow depth well that was under the influence from the surrounding water table including the septic systems of the small community.

Therefore, in the mid 60s several unofficial meetings were held and by 1968 Fosterburg Water District came into existence by order of Madison County Court. The biggest hurdle was finding a water source. Several options were looked at, from constructing its own water plant to purchase from neighboring communities. After several meetings it was decided to purchase water from the City of Alton.

As the word became known, more and more property owners and rural communities became interested in securing service from Fosterburg Water District (FWD). What started out as a small endeavor ended up being a system that was 90 miles in water main, 2 elevated water towers and 2 pump stations rated at 400 gallon per minute and cover about 95 square miles of territory with about 500 services and 1 employee. FWD borrowed from then Farmer Home Administration in the amount of \$1.78M.

As time went on and due to growth in the area the original configuration of pumps had gone beyond their expected life span and by the year 2000 a new total revamp of the pump stations had taken place. FWD once again borrowed over \$1.7M from IEPA. This allowed two new upgraded pumps stations to increase GPM from 400 to 1350 at each site with 2 additional above ground storage tanks each with a capacity of 750,000 gallons. As well as over the years, 2 additional elevated water towers were constructed.

The service area grew from 95 square miles to over 150 square miles with an increase from 90 miles of water main to over 250 miles of water main installed throughout the entire territory. The water services increased from 500 in the beginning to over 3,100 today, plus the total supply of water to the City Bunker Hill. Our employee staff has grown from 1 to 7 full-time. Of the 7 we have 5 state certified water operators.

As time marched on, Illinois American Water (a for-profit -corporation) purchased the complete water system from the City of Alton, including all satellite systems the City of Alton were serving (Fosterburg Water District, Village of Brighton, and Jersey County Rural Water).

With new ownership (for-profit-company with stockholders) the cost of water has risen several times over. FWD has filed and fought in the past many a rate increase, costing the district thousands of dollars with the end result being increases still being levied. Even though there is a process in which IAW has to follow; a rate case is filed with the Illinois Commerce Commission and take 11 to 12 months to go through the process. Now anyone who has any dealings with a rate increases case, one cannot simply address the ICC and expect any type of fair dealings. Even after spending thousands of dollars in hiring specialized individuals to state your case, the end results is exuberant rate increases.

Therefore, over the years FWD and Jersey County Rural Water had looked into working together in building our own water treatment plant. Not to only get away from the Corporate America but to have a say in how the operations and management should be.

Unfortunately, several times (over a 20+ year time frame) the Civil Engineers reviewed the proposed plan vs. current cost to purchase the economy of scale just wasn't there. Meaning future rate increases would continue and higher water costs too. Then came about The City of Carlinville, after a series of phone calls it came apparent that the odds might be in favor of the proposed idea of our own water plant.

Carlinville secured a grant to have a preliminary engineering report completed (study). As to find out whether or not the City of Carlinville would be better off rebuilding, build new, purchase from another source, or to join together a group to combine resources and build a regional water plant. The findings were the later, and after several more meetings the group that comprised of the City of Carlinville, Jersey County Rural Water and Fosterburg Water District had began working towards a group effort in forming an organization as allowed by Illinois statue, a not-for-profit-corporation or cooperative with a name of Illinois Alluvial Regional Water Company.

This has been challenged by those from the Carlinville area and has gone through the court system. In which at first IARWC was ruled illegal by the lower court. However, the Appellate court overturned the lower court findings as well as the Illinois Supreme court choose not to take up the case and agreed with the Appellate court opinion.

Today IARWC has 7 members and as with any large project, once it is being realized the actual building is being witnessed more will inquire over time. For our water infrastructure in the US is failing due to age and not keeping the systems operational. This is a well known fact and is a troubling condition for our communities.

This group of individuals is looking to help improve that situation in providing high-quality water at a fair price that is controlled by local individuals from the surrounding communities not Corporate America whereby they only want to charge more as to have a higher Rate of Return for their stockholders. FWD has had enough, as well the others; therefore FWD is working towards independence from Corporate America and bringing it back to the home town communities. Where it should be! At one time American Water (owner of Illinois American Water) was sold to an overseas Germany Company. It has since returned to American ownership! But imagine your water not being under American control but foreign control! Who's to say it wouldn't happen again! The old saying "money talks BS walks" is very true in Corporate America.

We even had our local representative from the Madison County Board state that what we are attempting is against the American way, Corporate America way! That FWD should be selling out to allow IAW to own our system! Don't know about you, but I think we should keep our own and be responsible to our communities. Take pride in our work as an American does.

