

July 19, 2021

Members present: Thomas, Feliciano, Daniels

With a quorum present, Thomas called the meeting to order at 6:59 PM.

Old Business: None

Item 1. Discussion Only – sewers and flooding issues

Mr. Schneider read a document regarding the problems and concerns that Bill and Julie Houck have had related to sewers and flooding at 957 Cambridge Ave. They have had council and administration work with them in the past.

Mr. Bischoff explained that they have modeled the system and found that the manholes are blowing from back pressure throughout the system. In the model, they can shut off the Professional Park lift station and the manholes will still blow back pressure when the system is inundated. It is not a grade issue. They sit lower than the structures that run up Cambridge on the 18" line. So, the next manhole is about six feet higher in elevation than the one across from Mr. Houck and even the covers at Forest Lawn and Virginia. Those two locations are about the same elevation of Normandy and Virginia, and they have the same issue over there. All the locations down through there share one common trait and it is the elevation of the manholes. These are the low points of the system through there. One solution they have is the plan that they are following. It is a flooded system issue.

Mr. Feliciano asked questions about the WPCO enhancement project that he pulled off the web page (2019). His concern is the size of the proposed pipes. They are going from a 42" to 27" to 42". The 27" looks like it's running down Columbia towards Blaine and then the 42" picks up another 24" and that is the problem. He wondered if that 27" has been replaced. He got this from the city's website.

Bischoff encouraged Feliciano to come into the office and he will go through it at great length. The 27" is an additional pipe to what is already there. It is not a big pipe to small pipe to big pipe. It is adding capacity in that section to increase the conveyance. The plan Mr. Feliciano is looking at does not show any of the existing pipes in there. It would be helpful to look at what they have existing with this attached to it to understand what the plan is and the improvements and the advance in sanitary capacity, storm capacity, and diversions.

Since this is consistently a problem with heavy rain, Mr. Kelly (365 E. Farming Street) asked if there were cross connections on storm drains and what about sump pumps. Bischoff stated that they have sump pumps tied to it but finding them can be difficult. With the sump pumps tied to it, a smoke test is not going to come out right. They hold water and have check valves and are very difficult. They have done a lot of evaluation of the system over the years. Thirty years of smoke testing different projects without very few catch basins connected directly to the sanitary. He is sure there is some leakage when they talk about the infrastructure and the way the system is. He is sure there are

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some out there, but very few. They feel that a lot of the water is comingled flow, not from the surface catch basins, but basically leakage within static systems.

The plan is to establish EPA compliance. The plan consists of hard seven phases up to nine phases. They are completing phase one which was the enhancement project at the treatment plant. That should be substantially completed about the end of September. Mid-October that should be fully done and online. That will double their wet weather capacity through the plant. There is a 5-million-gallon surge tank there. It is kind of like a phase 1a and 1b.

Right now, they are looking at what phase two should be. There are phases all laid out in the plant in conjunction with the EPAs recommendations on CSO, overflows, water in basements, and things like that. The city did negotiate an adaptive management plan, a flexible plan. As they see other issues come up, i.e., localized flooding and water in basements, they can go to the EPA and request changes. They are looking at something like that right now. They are meeting with their consultant to look at the evaluation of the system to see if they need to do something else in the plan of phase two. Phase two is more storage tanks, more detention structures at the ends of our system. They do have the ability to shift those phases to try to make everything work the best. The plan is not a one-size-one-fix all the way through for 7-9 phases. It is multi-faceted on what they are doing to build the system -- capacity at the end of the lines, increased conveyance, and diversion. In some neighborhoods, they have spent a lot of money/time to separate sewers from sanitary water to get that clean water out of the system before it has a chance to comingled back through some of the older pipes. There are multiple attacks to this problem. Now they can move some priorities in the plan -- so they stick with phase 2 as written or do they move something ahead to try to adjust a little differently. That plan is available for the public to see but is quite large. Bischoff encouraged interested parties to schedule time with him.

Mr. Neff stated that he was able to meet with Bischoff to get a better understanding of the sewer situation and how they are moving the water. He also understands how the plan is going forward. He also spoke with Mr. Daniels about some of his ideas as expressed at the last council meeting. He has contacted some other communities about programs that they have.

He has personally had some flooding issues in the past. He had to replace a furnace and water heater and he does not know how he could have made additional improvements on the lateral. He did have insurance available through the water company and they did fix his sewer line. They moved it up out of the floor to about two feet off the floor and rerouted outside. He has had no problems since.

Neff continued that the problem seems to be all over town, not confined to one area. Flooding on streets is an inconvenience. He is in favor of cleaning some ditches, by whatever measures they need to take.

He did talk to other communities that have combined sewers and issues with backups. The City of Springfield has a program since the mid-90s where they install backwater valves on verified backups. These valves work to keep the water from backing up into

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your property. He talked with Phil Wright, Marion County Sanitary Engineer, and the install backwater valves when residents have repeated backups. They also have the valves that Mr. Blevins had previously talked about that are installed by the road. It solves the problem now and he would like to investigate it for the city.

Avon Lake has a lateral loan program with funding from OWDA. This program has been operating since 2017. They have repaired thousands of lines on the customer's end. He is interested in applying for this funding. He has a conference call scheduled with them and invited other council members to participate.

Daniels stated that they have talked at length about backflow preventers, and they do work. He does not believe that this should be the first answer because the basement that is not flooded now may start flooding if there is no place to retain that storm water. The city would have now created circumstances that directly caused flooding of basements and it may create some liability. They must be able to show that the water that is no longer stored there has another place to go, other than a neighboring basement. They must increase retention capacities with the implementation of any check valve program.

Mr. Lengieza (Normandy Drive) agreed with Mr. Daniels and shared his personal experience with flooding and check valves. It is not 100% effective. Some water will seep in to start with until the pressure builds up. However, they cannot be the only answer. The entire system is over capacity. In the past, his neighborhood was worse because many neighbors had sump pumps going back into the system. The Law Director was successful in resolving that. He said that flooding seems to happen in the early hours now, where it used to be the following day. They do need to look at a system solution.

Daniels said they must balance solutions that may conflict with the EPA regulations. When water is redirected to treatment plant, it restricts water from entering the ditch and they are not fully using the capacity of the system. There are some ditches where there is no running water through it because it is all being treated. It is stagnant. By redirecting the flow, they are having to treat it at the plant.

Mrs. Swanger (Wilshire Drive) said that she will defer to the engineers and other people who know more than she does. She is not an engineer, so she will follow the experts. She is aware of many of the issues in her ward and has talked to the individuals involved. She expressed thanks to the city because after a big storm, the city comes out and cleans up. She cannot imagine the calls she would get if they would divert flow into the Qu Qua Ditch, which also runs through the 6th ward. Because of issues with our stacked system and the age of the infrastructure, it is her understanding that this would send contaminate water into the ditch. This will affect a lot more people. She has learned that if you solve one issue, it tends to cause another unintended issue somewhere down the road. They need to follow the plan, work the plan, and understand the built-in flexibility. They need to look to the experts. If this were a simple issue to solve, they would not be talking about it. This is not a new issue and there is no quick fix. It has been around for 30 years. She has people in her ward who have flooding in their yard because they have no sewer line to take the water.

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Feliciano said that citizens must do their part by keeping drains clear of debris, including grass clippings. Swanger agreed.

Thomas reiterated that he and Bischoff are encouraging the city to follow the plan that the EPA put in place. He gave the example of a change they made several years ago that redirected McKinley drainage from Columbia Street to the west side. That corrected some issues on Columbia, however it flooded basements in some areas on the west side. By following the EPA plan, they should be able to correct things however it may take some time.

Bischoff explained that the schedule, through all phases, is about 27 years. After every phase, they evaluate the system. Because of the evaluation and adaptability of the plan, they could get to the point after four phases that they see that some phases may work much better than anticipated. This could allow them to delete a phase or move something up because of the flexibility of the plan and their agreement.

Miss Booker (235 Thew Avenue) expressed concerns about how adding backflow valves may affect the current EPA plan. Bischoff explained that the check valves do not address the EPA's concern of water quality issues in the stream. Those basements were storage of some of the high water. Once you start minimizing that, that adds to the volume at our CSOs that is getting discharged to the streets. He will not say that the EPA would be against it, but it will do nothing to move the city closer to meeting requirements.

Daniels said that the EPA is requiring the city to fix a sewer system with their goals in mind. That is not generally resident's basements or the other things that are being complained about. It is compliance with the clean water act from the federal government.

Daniels said that there is some benefit to looking back historically at changes. He cited the example of the loss of a retention pond when the King Mansion Lake was converted to a parking lot. He also referred to the former Sawyer Ludwig Lake that had a head wall and a dam. That was removed by the EPA in 1991. The headwall was never reinstalled because of a soil remediation project that found contaminants. The water from that area flows down Colonial Ditch goes through the storm grate that clogs and ends up at the outlet of the Columbia Street Ditch. It may restrict the water flow if it is flooding and filling to capacity and may have those two ditches competing for an outlet. This means that the water levels raise in the ditch and all the way through town.

Daniels said that separating storm and sanitary projects are in the millions of dollars. Reinstalling a headwater or a head dam does not create a lake. It just allows it to flood, hold a huge volume of water, and then drain out over a course of hours instead of all at once. That may give the Columbia Ditch more time to empty.

Mayor Schertzer said that this is a complicated issue, and he appreciated the interest in learning more about the long-term control plan. They are not closed-minded to anything anyone is saying. Because they have a long-term control plan approved by the EPA, they do have to run things through the regulatory agencies. This is their second long term control plan, and it was developed in a methodical manner while meeting with local people and the EPA. This plan is far more flexible and allows for adaptive management.

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The other one did not and was rigid. The long-term control plan is also tied to the operating license of the wastewater treatment plant. He encourages people to meet with Bischoff to review the plan that is quite massive. Any new suggestions would need to be run by the EPA.

New Business:

Other Business:

Items not on the agenda:

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:51 PM.

Chairman Thomas

Clerk of Council

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