

## **Fort Wayne Sewer Advisory Group Meeting February 7, 2007**

### **Attending**

David Kohli, NEAP – Chair  
Ellen Fox, NEAP  
Sandy Boruk, NEAP  
Bob Chambers, NWAP  
Dan Wire, NWAP  
Allen R. Lauer, Sr., NWAP  
Ron Smith, Chamber of Commerce  
Rod Vargo, Ludwig Park  
Chuck Hilyard  
Laura Hillyard  
Kathleen Quilligan, News-Sentinel  
City of Fort Wayne staff:  
Greg Meszaros, Director of Public Works and City Utilities  
Mike Kiester, Engineering Support Services  
Susan Beck, NPDES Program Manager at WPCM  
Mary Jane Slaton, Water Resources

Instead of holding a stormwater sub-committee meeting, the Sewer Advisory Group sponsored an opportunity for citizens to attend to learn more about the proposed sewer rate increase and to ask questions. Chuck and Laura Hillyard attended the meeting with Chuck asking a number of questions and making observations about the City's proposed 1997 Long Term Control Plan for Combined Sewer Overflows and about money that has been committed over the past 10 years to reduce the likelihood of sewer backups in priority neighborhoods.

Greg Meszaros reported that City Utilities is hopeful that we will reach an agreement with EPA on a CSO strategy in 2007. Our agreement with them will be documented in a court order called a consent decree. Once the consent decree is drafted, there will be a public comment period when the community can give feedback. Based on the contents of an approved consent decree, City Utilities will develop a new, updated Long Term CSO Control Plan. As part of the negotiation process, the City has proposed spending on CSO controls only to the point of diminishing returns. That would take Fort Wayne from about 100 overflow days per year to about 4 and would cost around \$300 million.

David Kohli explained that early on in the history of the Sewer Task Force, the Task Force was emphatic that the work that would need to be done would require sewer rate increases. The Task Force supported a 37% rate increase in 1997 which included funds to address sewer backups into homes. David also stated that the Task Force realized that even if all CSOs were eliminated that would not necessarily mean that the rivers would meet water quality standards, so the Task Force focused on reducing backups and helping neighborhoods.

David asked if the City has estimated what the backup reduction program has saved citizens.

- Greg explained that a dollar figure is difficult to determine because many of the costs of cleaning up sewer backups are paid for privately and some of the costs cannot be expressed in dollars.
- David asked if City Utilities could calculate and report the cost of the proposed CSO program per citizen in the entire City and per citizen just in the combined sewer area.

- Chuck asked if home owners will be charged if City Utilities builds new sewers and the property is required to reconnect to the new sewer.
- Dan pointed out that the Curdes Avenue Task Force has been addressing the issue and has supported the idea that the entire community should share in all of the project costs.
- David expressed the sentiment that “if we all benefit (as from better river water quality) then we should all pay.”

### **Sewer Advisory Group**

Chairman David Kohli called the Sewer Advisory Group regular meeting to order at 6:15 PM.

Minutes of the December 6, 2006 meeting were reviewed and approved after several typographical errors were noted and corrected. The minutes will be posted on the City’s website.

### **Sewer Rates**

Director of Public Works and City Utilities Director Greg Meszaros updated the group on status of action to increase sanitary sewer rates.

- City Council discussed the increase in committee on Jan. 16. On a motion by Councilman Hayhurst, the issue was tabled until Feb. 13 to allow for more public discussion.
- Greg has been speaking to groups and organizations about the increase including: NWAP (he addressed SWAP, SEAP and NEAP during the fall of 2006). Greg has met with the Homebuilders Association and Metro Business Group and prior to Feb. 13 will meet with the Board of Directors of the Economic Development Alliance. Greg will also address the Northside Neighborhood Association on Feb. 19.

Sandy Boruk asked if the proposed rate increase takes into account the cost to upgrade downtown infrastructure to accommodate the proposed Harrison Square development.

- Greg explained that in general, developers pay the costs for infrastructure upgrades necessitated by development. City Utilities is putting some money into a sewer separation project in the Renaissance Point area, but for Harrison Square the improvements will be part of the overall financing for the project. City Utilities will carefully review plans for the development to ensure that any changes to the sewer system are sufficient to accommodate sewage and stormwater flow without causing backups, sewer surcharging or flooding.
- Harrison Square will be more pervious (less impervious) than the area is currently. So stormwater absorption should be better after the development than now.
- City Utilities may do some sewer separation downtown as part of the Harrison Square project.

Ellen asked if Harrison Square will have stormwater detention or if they will get the same benefit as Southtown and not be required to detain stormwater.

- Greg responded that there will be detention for Harrison Square, although it could be underground. He explained that Southtown will have detention and that the City plans to build a constructed wetland for detention, stormwater quality improvement and as an educational area with Safety Village.
- With redevelopment, City Utilities reviews plans to ensure that the development does not cause any problems and is making infrastructure systems better, if possible.
- Chuck Hillyard asked if the hard surface “footprint” at Southtown was reduced as a result of the new development.

- Greg explained that it was and that the community asked for an upgraded storm sewer system at Southtown. Renaissance Point will have an open detention basin. Having detention will add about \$1 million to the cost of the project.

### **Consent Decree Negotiations**

Greg gave an update on the status of negotiations with EPA. There have recently been a couple of phone conferences and more are expected. Greg feels confident there will be a consent decree by the end of 2007 and that it will be one that the community will find acceptable. Discussion has centered on two main issues: 1) the schedule – how long Fort Wayne will have to implement improvements to the combined sewer system; and 2) the level of control that will be required – based on how many overflow days will be permitted each year. City of Fort Wayne is committed to a CSO control program that involves high value projects with benefits to the community beyond just reducing overflows to the rivers.

- Dan Wire asked if there is anything the SAG should be doing to help move the process along.
- Greg responded that there is nothing for now, but that once we have a preliminary agreement the City will need help communicating about it to citizens and getting feedback from the public. The SAG can assist by helping us schedule discussions and presentations to community groups.
- Dan suggested adding a goal to the SAG goals for 2007 of having a consent decree by the end of the year and supporting the efforts of City Utilities and the City administration to do so.

### **Update on 2007 Goals**

Mary Jane reported on work that has been done toward accomplishing the SAG goals for 2007:

1. Community presentations:
  - Recently Greg has addressed the NWAP, Economic Development Alliance Board and will speak to Northside Neighborhood Association about the proposed sewer rate increase.
  - Alan Lauer suggested speaking to the Council on Senior Services. Their next meeting is March 20.
2. Recruiting representatives from Aboite Township
  - Southwest Area Specialist Ken Nicolet will be doing a mailing to Aboite Township neighborhood association presidents this week. It will include a letter from David Kohli asking for representatives from Aboite to join the SAG and inviting them to the April meeting.
3. Inform community groups – especially senior citizens – about help that is available to pay City Utilities bills.
  - City Utilities has developed an article that can be used in association and other newsletters that contains information about Utility bill payment options and bill payment assistance. The article was sent to all SAG members. It was also sent to Northeast Indiana Regional Council on Aging and should be in their March newsletter. It also went to The Clubhouse on Lake Avenue to be distributed to their clients.
  - SAG members suggested other outlets that should receive the information including Township Trustees offices, CANI, Lutheran Social Services and Catholic Charities, and First Call For Help.

Dan Wire made a motion with a second from Rod Vargo and Ellen Fox to add a fourth goal for 2007: The Sewer Advisory Group will support City Utilities and the City administration in its

efforts to negotiate an acceptable consent decree agreement to implement a CSO Long Term Control Plan. The SAG is committed to having an approved consent decree by the end of 2007.

### **Curdes Avenue Task Force Update**

- Dan stated that the group is working on finishing its policy statements. The Task Force will be adding a “parking lot” section to its recommendation document that will identify other issues that were not on the agenda for the Task Force but that it feels need to be addressed. This section will include information about stormwater drainage and a suggestion that City Utilities work with the County Building Department on a process for issuing plumbing permits in areas where City projects require that homeowners modify their internal house plumbing.
- Rod explained that the Task Force recommendations are now in the 4<sup>th</sup> draft version. The Task Force is committed to developing a recommendation document that all members will support. Rod also explained that there may be some issues that are identified that will need to come to the SAG for a fuller discussion.
- David was pleased that the Task Force has expanded its scope to look at other issues that will be important to neighborhood residents.
- Ellen expressed her concerns about how the recommendations and proposed projects will affect elderly and disabled residents – both in terms of costs and neighborhood disruption.
- Rod complimented City Utilities for its open attitude and willingness to listen to citizens.

### **Other topics**

- Greg announced that Pat Callahan has taken a new job with AquaIndiana. Pat was with City Utilities for about 14 years and worked very closely with the original Sewer Task Force and recently with the SAG. He will be missed and we wish him well.
- At the last meeting (Dec. 6, 2007) David had asked Jeff Morris about sewer backup calls received during the heavy rains on Dec. 1. Jeff provided the following information:

|                   |    |
|-------------------|----|
| Back up calls     | 26 |
| Basement flooding | 1  |
| Cave-in           | 1  |
| Street flooding   | 55 |
| Yard flooding     | 7  |
- Chuck Hillyard observed that when he has flooding at his home it is because of high river levels. His home did experience a sewer backup, but it was because of a collapse on the private tap.

**The next meeting of the Sewer Advisory Group will be on April 4, 2007 with the Stormwater Sub-Committee meeting beginning at 5:30 PM.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 PM

Respectfully submitted:  
Mary Jane Slaton