

Temporary fixes urged to Fairview residents as city continues troubleshooting extensive flooding

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FAIRVIEW PARK, Ohio – A standing-room-only crowd filled the Dunson Community Room Aug. 20 in hopes of hearing a strategy that will grant them relief from persistent flooding in their Fairview Park homes.

Ward 4 Councilman John Hinkel coordinated the meeting on behalf of **City Council** so that disgruntled citizens could air grievances about backed-up sewage in their basements, flooded driveways and waterlogged streets. **A recent storm adversely affected homes in every ward**, with 155 documented reports of flooding problems that encompassed at least 20 streets.



Director of Public Service and Development Rob Berner addresses a large crowd during an Aug. 20 Town Hall meeting about flooding problems throughout the city.

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“A lot of people reached out to me ... and they wanted to see that people cared,” Hinkel said just prior to the meeting. “I want residents to understand the things we’ve done in the past because I’m concerned there are people who think we haven’t done much. The second thing is, I want them to walk out of here knowing there’s a plan we’re going to execute, that we are bringing in a third party to help us.”

Director of Public Service and Development Rob Berner told residents the current sanitary sewer and stormwater collection system throughout much of Fairview is more than 60 years old. Sewer design, among other things, has changed during those six decades, he said.

“Our frequency of large downpours is increasing,” Berner said. “We’ve had three of them already this year. We need to address the changing rainstorms we’re having. We need to actually get into the 21st century with looking at the design of our (stormwater) collection system.”

City Engineer Michael Mackay indicated ongoing programs such as grouting and repairing sanitary sewers and manholes have helped, but stormwater problems persist.

"Another thing we are currently doing as a result of the May storm is we are individually going out to see people whose homes are chronically flooding," Mackay said. "And for every new project that comes into the city, like Westgate and the Garnett Health Campus, we are requiring them to install extensive stormwater detention systems."

Questionnaires were offered to homeowners so they could schedule an evaluation with Mackay. He said he has completed between 40 and 50 home visits so far.

"We have been making a difference," he said. "We have decreased the amount of water we're sending to (the Rocky River Wastewater Treatment Plant). So, that means less stormwater is getting into our sanitary sewers."

"That's because it's all in my basement," one woman scoffed, while another resident shouted, "We've heard it all before."

Part of the standing-room-only crowd listens intently to proposed corrective measures for citywide flooding issues.
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As a temporary measure to alleviate basement flooding, Berner encouraged homeowners to disconnect any downspouts where water flows through pipes into the ground. He recommended buying pipe caps and splash guards to "splash your system" and divert water from the sides of the home. Backflow preventers, sometimes called check valves, are permitted in Fairview Park but are not "cure-alls," he added.

"We're going to start from scratch with our plan to improve our sewer system," Berner explained. "The problem is we're getting too much stormwater in the collection system. There's a lot of things we can do, and we're trying to work together to solve these problems. That's our commitment."

An engineering firm specializing in storm water and sanitary sewer collection systems is anticipated to consult with the city soon. Berner estimated it will take 15 to 20 months just to develop a plan and determine how to implement it. The final fix, however, will take "a lot of years," he advised, and involve a significant financial investment.

"It will probably be a four- or five-phase solution that's going to take four to 15 years to implement," Berner said. "The most pressing areas will be done first."

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