



Memorandum



ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

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TO: Gary Barczak, Chair, Board of Public Works
Michael Czaplewski, First District
Martin Weigel, Second District
Daniel Roadt, Fourth District
James Sengstock, Fifth District

FROM: Michael Lewis, Director of Public Works/City Engineer

DATE: January 4, 2010

RE: **Communication from City Engineer Regarding New Program
Sponsored by the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District for
Repair of Private Sanitary Sewer Laterals**

Attached is an article that summarizes MMSD's new program designed to start working on the problem with leaking laterals. The City has spent millions on the public side of the sanitary sewer system and now, in order to comply with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, along with MMSD, rules/regulations, we will be forced into doing something with private laterals.

It's a simple fact that our system leaks (along with everyone else's). Depending on what study you read, private laterals can contribute up to 80% of the peak stormwater flow to a system. Considering the age of our housing and the large number of foundation drains directly connected to the sanitary sewer system (the home doesn't have a sump pump), it's safe to say private laterals are causing at least 40% of our problem.

There are a number of West Allis' sewer "basins" that exceed MMSD's flow allowances. We will be ordered in the future to make whatever repairs are necessary to our system and private laterals must be in the equation. This program will allow us to try different ways to make cost-effective repairs and create the procedures and policies we will need to address the problem.

You will be hearing a lot more on this in the future.

Cc: Common Council
Mayor Dan Devine
Paul Ziehler, CAO

The group will focus on protecting drinking water, lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands, said state Sen. Neal Kedzie, R-Elkhorn, a member of the group formed last week to update groundwater protection

draw to...
developers in rural areas," said Brad Boycks, director of government and political affairs for the Wisconsin Builders Association. "They want to know what

"I always cringe when I hear about... state mandate, because in a hundred different communities, you're dealing with a hundred different situations."

MMSD to help pay for repair work to private pipes

District proposes spending \$1 million from 2010 to 2015 to reduce leaks

SEAN RYAN

sean.ryan@dailyreporter.com

Who will fix the leaky pipes? Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District officials are letting area municipalities decide.

During rainstorms, leaky sewer laterals allow extra water into the sewer system, contributing to overflows. And making repairs is complicated because the laterals are privately owned.

“The problem is it's always been the lateral, the private laterals. Are you going to charge somebody to do it? Do you have government pay for all of it?”

Jack Bennett
director of public works,
city of Franklin

“The problem is it's always been the lateral, the private laterals,” said Jack Bennett, Franklin director of public works. “Are you going to charge somebody to do it? Do you have government pay for all of it?”

The MMSD proposes to offer area municipalities money to start tackling the problem next year, said district Executive Director Kevin Shafer. The district this month is proposing to dedicate \$1 million a year between 2010 and 2015 to the 28 municipalities that send it sewage to be treated at MMSD plants.

Shafer said the five-year program is the start of an effort to ensure the 3,000 miles of private pipes in the district's service area are in good repair.

It will take much more than \$5 million to put a dent in the problem, said Richard Sokol, Greenfield director of neighborhood services.

The biggest problem in Greenfield is basement foundation drains that send water into the sewers, he said. It costs on average about \$8,000 per house to fix the problem, and there are at least 1,100 old houses that could use the work, he said.

The idea of dedicating money to private pipes stalled last year because of disagreement over how to divide MMSD money among area communities, Shafer said. But this year, the MMSD

IGN Stone

Stone mason Rick Patterson of Kraen Brothers LLC, Plain, poses next to a form Tuesday for the driveway entrance sign to the new Ign Stone Franchising System Inc. headquarters in Prairie du Sac. Kraen Brothers is constructing the approximately 40,000-square-foot building, which will include a culinary training center. The project is scheduled for completion at the end of November.

PHOTO BY KUSHNETZ

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Another store owner to seize on the need for green supplies is Peter Seltzer, creator of Canopy, a green building supply store.

Seltzer, a New Orleans native, was studying entrepreneurship at Temple University and working as a corporate sustainability consultant when he got the idea for his business. "There was the demand, but there wasn't the supply" of green building projects available, Seltzer said of the local market at the time.

Canopy's products range from countertop materials made from recycled paper and recycled glass to renewable flooring materials, nontoxic paints, LED lighting fixtures and low-water plumbing fixtures. The store has also formed a partnership with EcoUrban, a local sustainable landscaping company founded in 2007, and sells rainwater cisterns for use in home-irrigation systems.

"We're really trying to develop the market here," Seltzer said. "There really is a demand and need for these products."

products to move into the mainstream.

"People only think of a few places to go to buy their mainstream building materials," he said. "And those big box retailers have a tendency to sell a lot of products that aren't green."

Jon Luther, executive vice president of the Greater New Orleans Home Builders Association, said green-building products increasingly will become the norm as customers demand them. But while interest is significantly more pronounced than it was even two years ago when his organization launched its green-building program, a "critical mass" of local consumers interested in such products has yet to be reached.

"At the end of the day, any movement still at some level has to be generated by the home-buying clientele," Luther said. "Our builders are going to respond to demand and our vendors are going to respond to the products and techniques that our builders are using."

Weeks ation l levels

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Mark Miller, D-Monona.

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lie said previous short-
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need to be used as building
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Municipalities must decide whether to mandate repairs

Pipes, FROM PAGE 1A

municipalities worked out a plan to share district money. It will be the subject of public hearings this month and will be considered with the 2010 MMSD budget in October.

Each community contributes property taxes to the district. Under the plan, each community's share of the \$1 million for private pipe repairs would match the proportion the community contributes to the MMSD budget.

Sokol called the idea a "bold and aggressive step," but said it leaves a lot of details for municipalities to work out, starting with how to raise local money for the effort. To get the MMSD money, each community must contribute 25 percent of the amount it receives from the district.

The requirement leaves municipalities to decide whether to spend their sewer fees for projects to fix private property, Sokol said.

"That does raise a good philosophical question, of course," he said, "which is, 'Why are public funds being used for this purpose?'"

In addition, municipalities must decide whether to require residents to fix their pipes or use public money to entice them.

Preston Cole, director of operations for the Milwaukee Department of Public Works, said he prefers to encourage — not mandate —

repairs by using public money to investigate private laterals.

When streets are being rebuilt, contractors can take videos of the laterals on the street and notify property owners of problems, said Cole, who spearheaded efforts to fix private lines as chairman of the MMSD Commission last year.

"Once they find out it is collapsed or clogged or problematic, people might be moved to action," Cole said. "But being moved to action is quite different than paying the price. That's where the rubber meets the road."

Although the availability of MMSD money should initiate repair efforts, Bennett said, he would rather have each municipality deal with repairs on its own.

But there are other problems, Bennett said, such as getting the right to work on private property. Some municipalities can use easements to temporarily turn private pipes into public rights of way, but Franklin cannot without changing its laws, he said.

"It's a little tough because we don't have easements. We don't have rights of entry for private stuff," Bennett said.

Cole said there are details to work out, but the region must stop water from private pipes overloading the sewer system during rainstorms.

"If we don't solve that problem, we'll continue to have overflows," he said, "and that's unacceptable."