

Minutes
Environmental Stewardship Commission
July 14, 2021

Members Present: Chris Pagan, Patrick Walker, Katie Lawrence, Lauren Albarella

City Council Representative: Sarah Stankorb Taylor

City Staff: Rob Nicolls

Storm Water Task Force Reps: Ryan Geismar, Liam O'Shaughnessy

Meeting Minutes Approval

Approval of June 9, 2021 Meeting Minutes with no changes - approved by members

Solid Waste/Recycling Rate Update

- Rob presented spreadsheet of the City's waste and recycling numbers from Rumpke
- Upcycle number included under "special junk"
- What do we need to know about these numbers - other specifics?
 - Rob will inquire and clarify
- Leaf count is added to recycling rate
- Bottom line: differentiating and categorizing the numbers is important
- If we divert waste from a landfill we are calling it "recycling" as clarification for Rob

Joint Ventures with Urban Forestry

Storm Water Study Update

- Concept came to fruition through ESC as more houses were having flooding issues
- City cannot intervene in house specific issues with water but should try and address larger systemic drainage problems causing issues in multiple pockets
- Study attempting to get information/data on excess water/sewage issues occurring in numerous areas
- Lofty ideas at the start but after survey commenced it became less clear as to next steps
- Study is tracking residents who have consistent issues (noted in some cases as intersection points)
- Questions in the survey are: timing, what type of flooding (water, sewage in basements, yards, etc.), volume and details around damage - timeframe last 5 years
- Have so far collected a lot of information - both quantitative and qualitative
- Rob, pulling data set together in a tangible way to review results and decide on next steps (using tools he has access to as a landscape architect)
 - Help from Liam O'Shaughnessy (HS senior)
- Historic stream alignments have been altered which ultimately causes issues with flooding
- Georeferenced data points based on where a house was located or intersections
- Existing old, combined sewers in city (both water and sewage) - this is a problem when we get excess rain
- Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) has been somewhat involved and evaluating

- There are a handful of clusters that are having sewer backup issues - this does not look coincidental
 - In areas close to the combined sewers
- In some cases homes have more than a foot of sewage coming in so issues are significant
- Along creeks and “historic creeks” we see more “surface flows” aggregating in yards
- Again in some cases water depth is deep (around 4 feet)
- Also seeing “water intrusion issues” where water is seeping into houses from the yard
- There are hot spot issues for all of these problems - patterns have been revealed that require further investigations
- Yard flooding - city cannot do much about that except for education - depending on number of properties where city owned interventions may be possible (city land in proximity)
- Consent decree with MSD - is Wyoming a part of this??
- MSD should be handling sewer issues - working to obtain some leverage to get them to act
- The whole point was to do away with the old combined sewer overflow issues
 - Goal is to remove storm water going into combined sewers to relieve pressure on the system
- Grove/Waverly big sewer back up issue
- What are options with phase 2?: Education campaigns run by ESC
 - Get information to residents on what can be done to mitigate these issues
 - Hopefully in conjunction with city and MSD efforts depending on situation
- Clean water act enforcement action to get MSD to intervene - seems to be a real action we can take?
- Need to tread carefully when it comes to bringing in attorneys
- Can we get MSD to come here and evaluate, and present to the city - non confrontational but collaborative?
- We will try to obtain public information as to what MSD has done in other locations
- Agreed that we need to get data in order as well as plans for next phases and present to council about what city can do and how other future projects should be managed
- A tip: unhook downspouts from sewer system (to reduce amount of water going into sewer)
 - This may be more applicable to those on flatter ground (otherwise the water runs downhill into others yards)
- What have other municipalities done to solve these issues?
- Storm water mitigation credit could make sense here
- Stearns Mansion issue with potential parking lot going in
 - Need to have a study there could be a major water runoff issue
- A summary document (one pager, visually compelling) for council a powerful next

step (current and future council)

- Larry Falkin, former Director of Sustainability for Cincinnati is now Assistant Superintendent at MSD - can we get him involved to advise - even via Zoom to weigh in? (Sarah will spearhead this)
- Create a list of sustainable, knowledgeable landscape architects (and/or other appropriate professionals) that can help with storm barrels, rain gardens and other environmentally sound solutions home owners can take to manage these issues
- Consider zoning ordinances that can strike a balance between allowing leeway for homeowners yet prevent any projects that would cause major runoff issues for neighbors (i.e. 5 car garages)
 - Tends to be by property size
 - Probably should be reviewed
- Natural life span of city trees are ending - will need to factor in issues with greenspace

Community Gardens Clean Up

- Date setting for group clean-up - when is the ideal time to do this? - TBD
- Still scoping out what will make most sense for gardens when their work is finished for the season

Eco Styrofoam Event

- Patrick emailed TJ to get information on how they want to run the event and when (January 7th ish time frame in Oak Park) - Patrick will follow-up again

Educational Plan Magnet - Held off on discussion with Sarah not present; on hold generally to consider ESC budget and other options

Fall Festival

- Need to decide who will run the booth - Chris Babb?
- Recycling game that was used previously could be done again (sorting game for kids)
- Have lots of leftover reusable straws
- Have iPad or some way people can sign up for newsletter
- Could present storm water information and have survey on hand
- Historical data on rainfall and increasing frequencies etc. from environmental standpoint to showcase
- Education angle - other options residents can take to manage water issues or to make environmental upgrades yards/driveways

Miscellaneous

Trash audits - Katie is ready to go with this

- Better Bin compost shed is feasible and we can get it going - trying to decide

good location and how shed can get installed

- First step to see how it is received and what volume we get to upgrade to a curbside pickup
- Note: We don't pay the ton we do by container (by ton is an option) for garbage pickup
- Have "Ask ESC" with recycling issues
 - Good branding for ESC
 - Community can have access to us as a commission to answer their questions
 - Video to kick-off
 - Folks will be able to funnel questions in for quick response
- Urban Forestry Beautification Award
 - Can we expand on who can get this?
 - Will have to run it through them should be run through them
 - There are people who are doing things (picking up trash etc.) and would be good to get recognition
- Or we can do a green business award adjunct for individuals?

Patrick's Follow-up Email (7-15-21) re: Storm water issues:

I walked Worthington today. The storm water study group presented data last night. Worthington was a high data cluster for sewer back-ups and water intrusion.

In regards to combined sewage systems. Only 4 houses drain spouts are still tied to sewage system. Most houses daylight onto yard. Last night I recommended untying from sewer system to reduce chances of a sewer basement back up. This also implies homeowners have done what they can and is a higher chance of being an older sewer sizing issue.

Though decreasing chance of sewage back up. Downspouts and gutters are the number one reason for water intrusion. I noticed one home with a downspout shooting straight down against foundation, no turn, no splash block. This one has a higher probability of water intrusion in the basement.

Environmental Solutions then become landscaping rain gardens, water management systems, and green streets.

Also all the homes along Worthington are early block foundation. All should probably have sump pumps and may need additional foundational structural solutions.

In regards to green streets. There was conversation about driveways that absorb water. Average cost 50grand, extremely cost prohibitive.

But the central idea is to delay the water the driveway produces, as long as possible, from taxing our drainage sewer system. Green streets tend to remove curbs and dig water management systems between sidewalks and road and essentially a rain garden above. A green street for your driveway would be a trench alongside it or mini rain garden. To slow water before reaching sewer.

If driveway pitched towards the street cut a drain and pitch to either side of driveway apron, as you would if driveway were pitched towards the house.

Side note: I do recall Terry mentioning green street options being discussed during road projects but typically deemed impractical situational or cost prohibitive.

Additional comments:

I just yesterday walked the upper portion of Worthington, towards the Pike which I would guess pitches and drains towards the lower block of Worthington.

In most cases I could not see for certain from the sidewalk whether or not these homes were connected. Much larger homes; with wrap around porches, lattice, and bushes obstruct my view. I am suspicious though these may still be connected and contributing to the water issues of the lower block of Worthington. Depending on the homes construction, gutter drains may have to remain connected as a lot of these homes have box gutters and may have interior drains (I did see exterior downspouts on most homes meaning interior drains unlikely).

Last note: the homes that are tied in seem to be tied in more recently and in conjunction with a basement waterproofing or sump pump.