



9/19/16

Approved 10/13/16

1200 Wilmette Avenue  
WILMETTE, ILLINOIS 60091-0040

**MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE MEETING OF THE  
PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE VILLAGE OF  
WILMETTE HELD ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2016 AT 7:00 P.M.  
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE VILLAGE HALL,  
1200 WILMETTE AVENUE, WILMETTE, ILLINOIS.**

---

Members Present:

President                      Bob Bielinski

Trustee                      Carol Ducommun  
                                    Cam Krueger  
                                    Ted McKenna  
                                    Senta Plunkett  
                                    Daniel Sullivan  
                                    Julie Wolf

Staff Present:

Timothy Frenzer, Village Manager  
Michael Braiman, Assistant Village Manager  
John Prejzner, Assistant to the Village Manager  
Brigitte Berger, Engineering & Public Works Director  
Melinda Molloy, Finance Director  
Russ Jensen, Village Engineer

**I.      Call to Order**

President Bielinski called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

The Village Board briefly discussed future meeting dates and concluded that it was important to have all Trustees available for future discussions regarding the long term capital improvement plan.

**II.     Discussion of Storm Sewer System Improvements**

Brigitte Berger, Director of Engineering and Public Works, gave a Power Point presentation on Wilmette's Sewer System. (see attached) The presentation covered:

- Overview of the Separate Sewer System
- Why Homes Flood
- Past Sewer Infrastructure Investments
- Reported Sanitary Sewer Backup Results
- Proposed 2017 Sewer Budget
- Separate Storm Sewer Study Timeline

- Discussion of Storm Sewer System
- Financial Review

Ms. Berger noted the Municipal Services Committee has met numerous times during the past three years to discuss the Separate Storm Sewer System. At the last meeting on April 4 2016, Village staff presented an update on the Separate Storm Sewer Study, including implementation schedule, cost/benefit review, and analysis of funding options. The Municipal Services Committee (MSC) consensus was that Alternative 1, building a relief storm sewer system (\$77 million), is the logical alternative because the storm segments can be built over a long period of time; the committee did acknowledge that timing would be a challenge.

Darren Olson, Christopher B. Burke Engineering Services, gave a power point presentation on the Separate Storm Sewer System Study that they have been working on for the past two years. (see attached) The presentation covered:

- Summary of Flooding Analysis
- Presentation of Selected Alternative
- Summary of Benefits and Costs
- Sample Phasing Plan

Mr. Olson said the estimated cost of the project would be approximately \$77 million for Alternative 1.

Trustee Ducommun asked how old were other communities infrastructures as compared to Wilmette's infrastructure.

Mr. Olson said Wilmette has some of the oldest infrastructure from a stormwater perspective. Wilmette's problem is unique in that they need to put in new storm sewers that take water all the way from Kenilworth Gardens to the pump station which is nearly three miles away.

Trustee Krueger asked for clarification that there is not another alternative that they have not considered for where to send stormwater as stormwater has to go down Lake Avenue out through the current pump station.

Ms. Berger said that is correct, the receiving body of water is the North Branch of the Chicago River and that is where the stormwater needs to go.

Trustee Wolf said when the Municipal Services Committee looked at the different alternatives, one thing other than the scale of reduction in water problems with Alternative 1, the Village would have control over construction of the streets and the sewers as opposed to the other Alternatives which would require cooperation with other units of government.

President Bielinski asked Mr. Olson to explain why Alternatives 3 and 3a would not be a big enough benefit to the neighborhoods.

Mr. Olson said the amount of storage for Alternative 3 would be approximately 30-35 acre feet of flood storage and that would fill up pretty quickly during a 100 year flood event. The remainder of the flood water would be in the streets because the storage tank would be full.

President Bielinski said the bottom line seems to be installing larger pipes to get the water out of the area is the key, and then other individual projects may or may not help a particular area.

Trustee Plunkett said if a homeowner installs overhead sewers and does all the other flood prevention necessary on their property, how would that relate to the proposed project.

Mr. Olson said it depends on where the home is located as they may still have flooding if the property is at the lowest spot in the area and water will always collect there and rise to certain levels.

Ms. Berger said with a sanitary back up, a homeowner can install a flood control system or overhead sewer system to protect the home but with overland stormwater flooding, there is not a lot that can be done.

Trustee Ducommun said she would like to understand what the reasons were for not going with Alternative 2 which is the centralized storage at the Community Playfield.

Mr. Olson said Alternative 2 is taking the Community Playfield, which is the area between Highcrest School and Wilmette Junior High School, and lower it approximately 10-15 feet and that would become a storage area. There would still have to be storm sewer construction to get the water to this central location where the water could be stored and discharged later to the pump station.

Trustee Plunkett said there are approximately 1700 children that attend the two schools and having a large flooded area between the two schools until the water is drained concerns her.

Trustee Wolf noted that the MSC did look at the options for underground and above ground storage at the Community Playfield and they did have concerns with the two schools being near above ground water storage.

Trustee Krueger said in the MSC discussions, his concerns were that if they are really committed to solving the problems, then they have to make the pipes bigger as they are quite old and too small.

President Bielinski asked for Finance Director Melinda Molloy to address the financial ramifications of the projects.

Ms. Molloy reviewed the history of the Village of Wilmette debt service for the General Fund, Water Fund and Sewer Fund stating that current outstanding debt is \$107.4 million. She also noted that since 1990, the Village has also issued a total of \$37.8 million in debt through the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency low interest loan program for sewer work. The \$77 million project would increase debt service in the sewer fund from \$57 million to an estimated \$217 million. The estimated impact of new debt service to the average annual household sewer bill would be approximately \$325 for a \$40 million project, \$500 for a \$60 million project and \$625 for a \$77 million project.

President Bielinski noted that there are road projects and other capital improvement projects proposed for the 2017 budget that would also increase property taxes for residents.

President Bielinski asked if there was anyone present to speak. He noted that all resident questions would be addressed after everyone has finished speaking.

Elizabeth Gondra, 612 Lavergne Avenue, asked what has been done to solve flooding problems in her area for the past 30 years. She believes there are health issues related to flooding and said many people do not report their flooding. She asked how many engineers had been hired to address the flooding issues. She asked if there were any businesses that were paid by the Village to remodel. She is against spending \$77 million if there is no guarantee that flooding will not occur.

Mark Schoenfield, 328 Wilshire Drive West, said he has felt frustrated and abandoned by the Village and believes the Village should act now on a project.

Sherri Gold, said she has two homes in Kenilworth Gardens, 2020 Thornwood and 2045 Greenwood. The house at 2045 Greenwood has flooded recently and she is in the process of installing overhead sewers. She is asking the Village for a cost share in the installation of overhead sewers.

Karlene McAllester, 323 Wilshire Drive, said stormwater and sanitary is very difficult and complicated to understand, there should be more meetings to address it. She referenced studies she has researched regarding sewer problems and what can be done to help flooding. There is an increase in the rain events that keep happening every year and people flood because they are located in a bad place on the storm sewer drainage system. She believes a special service area is really unacceptable to the majority of

people on the west side and believes the same recommendations have been made for the past seven years.

Julie Schmidt, 2330 Greenwood, said she had a sewer back up in her home from a recent storm event. She spoke to Ms. Berger and her staff and they was very helpful and responsive. Ms. Berger told her that the Engineering Department has asked for money since 2001 to fund a program to reimburse homeowners for a portion of the cost to install a residential back flow prevention. The request has been denied each year and she understands that there are multiple factors for that decision. She sees that there is a proposal in the 2017 Budget for a significantly reduced amount of the previously requested \$100,000. She asked if the amount being requested in the 2017 Budget was for only overhead sewers or for backflow prevention in the ground. She respectfully asked that the Village Board approve the request for the 2017 Budget.

Wendy Schultz, 2130 Beechwood, said she believes Option 1 leaves certain areas of Wilmette with an unsafe amount of water after storm events. There is a safety issue with the large amount of water on Beechwood after a rain event as fire trucks, police cars and ambulances are not able to get down the street. She asked the consultants what it would take to bring down the large amount of water on Beechwood after a rain event to a safe level. The consultant said he would suggest in addition to Option 1, also implement the basin under Thornwood Park. She would like to see that happen.

Ryan Schultz, 2130 Beechwood, said there have been several incidents during the rain events where he was not able to walk to his school bus in the flooded street. A Nicor gas truck was not able to get down the street due to the high water to respond to a gas leak issue, so he believes there is a serious safety issue with the storm event flooding.

Samuel Lin, 235 Kilpatrick, said there have been many floods for the past 28 years and he has lost cars and there has been damage to his home. He supports Alternative 1 for \$77 million even though it will not help flooding in his area. He asked the Board to consider helping his neighborhood with changing the ground elevation to help the water stay in the street rather than flow down into his below grade garage and home.

Chip McColl, 2116 Beechwood, said he agrees with everything his neighbor Wendy Schultz said. It seems like the best solution is Alternative 1 but if the plan does not happen for another 6-7 years, then he would encourage the combined plan of the Thornwood basin. He is concerned with the safety issues when the streets flood in Kenilworth Gardens and encouraged the Board to consider that.

John Henrick, 205 Thelin, said he has been talking about flooding issues for the 46 years he has lived in the Village. He has installed overhead sewers. He believes larger pipes are needed to get the water to flow away

from the Village and believes there should be a new construction moratorium. He would like to see the problem fixed now.

Elias Freidman, 915 Illinois Road, said he recently moved to Wilmette and is surprised to see all the beautiful homes, parks, great schools and services. He finds it hard to believe how bad the flooding is in Wilmette and he experienced a flood event this past summer. He believes something needs to be done to help with the flooding.

Dale Davison, 922 Seminole Road, said she has had several feet of water in her basement. She put in a rain garden and also a clean check valve which failed and she wondered why. She agrees with other neighbors and is also interested in the cost share program and wonders if that will solve the problem for her home.

President Bielinski noted there was no one else who wanted to speak to the issue and said he would respond to residents' questions. He asked the Village Manager how meetings were noticed for residents.

Village Manager Timothy Frenzer said the Village followed and went above the requirements of the Open Meetings Act. Meeting notices were sent to the press, posted at Village Hall and the train station as well as on the Village website. The notice was sent out to everyone on the sewer/water email list and sent out in the Village E-news.

President Bielinski said there were several questions from residents about check valves being installed.

Ms. Berger said the Village does not put check valves on the sanitary sewer system.

President Bielinski said in reference to the cost share program, the question is whether it is fair to share your neighbors' money to pay for overhead sewers as any monies coming from the Village for sewers are paid by Wilmette residents. There is a proposal for a cost share program in the 2017 Budget again before the Village Board.

President Bielinski said there was a question about past decisions from the Village Board and asked Trustees Krueger and McKenna for input as they had been on the Board the longest.

Trustee Krueger said he believed all the consultant studies are worth it as the Village Board does not want to spend money unless there is some certainty of what the impact will be for a proposed project. The studies are very important and they will continue to study if there is not the right amount of data for an answer to solve the program.

Trustee Wolf said one of the studies being done now is with other municipalities as Wilmette is in the same watershed in other communities and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District. She agrees with Trustee Krueger that the studies are important as the more information that we have, the better planning the Village can do.

President Bielinski said there was a question about other options for lesser cost but the Board did not consider any of the A options as there was no support for those.

President Bielinski said there was a question about relief sewers on the east side versus the west side.

Ms. Berger said she was not at the Village in the late 1980's but believes there were meeting discussions by the Village Board then as the relief sewer on Greenleaf Avenue was a major project.

President Bielinski said there was a question about locations of sewers, and asked if it was accurate that if you are further away from the outflow, it will take longer for your street to drain.

Ms. Berger said that is generally a true analysis.

President Bielinski said the pipes being too small is a systemic issue on the west side but there are also topographical issues. If there was a project and an incremental cost number that would benefit one block of Kenilworth Gardens, would the Board be interested in supporting that.

Trustee Plunkett said she has listened to residents who have invested money in flood control due to where they live and still flood so an extra \$500 a year to the sewer bill would not be an issue for them but there are other residents who do not flood and that extra money would be an issue. The Trustees have to answer to all residents.

Trustee Wolf said it is frustrating as a Trustee to not have enough money to fix everything that needs to be fixed such as flooding, paving streets and adding new street lights. The question had come up regarding finding a way that if people really want to do something in their neighborhood then they could chip in and pay to have it done but she did not believe that applied to sewers.

Trustee Krueger said he believes that might be a good idea for other neighborhood projects.

President Bielinski asked if there was an alternative to spending unlimited funds to fix every problem for every house regarding flooding.

Trustee Ducommun asked if it is a combination where you take care of the basic issue and then target other specific solutions.

Trustee Krueger said he believes you have to start with the main issue of larger pipes and then find a combination of solutions to address the other problems.

Trustee Ducommun asked Mr. Olson if a combination of solutions to address certain areas would be a legitimate solution to the flooding.

Mr. Olson said that is a solution that is done in many municipalities.

President Bielinski said a resident suggested that building under Thornwood Park would only be \$7 million. He asked if that is an accurate number.

Mr. Olson said he believes that number is low as Alternative 3 for neighborhood stormwater storage was \$45 million. They roughly allocate \$15 million to each one of three areas they had targeted, so the Thornwood project would be \$15 million. The resident had suggested Alternative 3 after the larger project was done so the cost would go down but would be closer to \$9 -10 million but this is only an estimate and further study would be required.

President Bielinski asked what the benefits would be regarding water in the streets if Alternative 1 and Alternative 3 were completed.

Mr. Olson said there would be benefits as it would move the flood elevation down but there would not be dry streets.

Trustee Wolf asked if it would be feasible to do Alternative 3 in Thornwood Park right away.

Mr. Olson said all of the pipes around Thornwood Park would have to be replaced in order to benefit from the Thornwood Park storage but the rest of the system would not be in place to drain it out.

President Bielinski asked Ms. Berger if there is stormwater on the street, is it tainted by sewage.

Ms. Berger said to the extent that there is cross infiltration between the storm and sanitary pipes, there could be some contamination in the street. When we see water surging through manholes, however, it is stormwater.

President Bielinski said that there was a gentleman that spoke regarding his garage below grade and noted that the Village does not allow garages to be built below grade anymore. He asked what the best way would be to tackle a below grade garage issue.

Mr. Frenzer said the resident should talk to Community Development to find out what type of modifications the homeowner would need for help through any type of zoning process that would be needed.

President Bielinski said there was a question regarding why the Village does not have a building moratorium. He said when a new home is built, a grading plan addressing stormwater must be submitted to the Engineering Department for approval.

Ms. Berger said depending on the size of the development for residential subdivisions or commercial development, they actually have to provide a certain level of protection to make it better. That is regulated by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, in order to receive a permit for a new development, you have to follow the Cook County Watershed Management Guidelines.

President Bielinski said a resident asked about a clean check valve and a flood control valve.

Ms. Berger said she does not know much about the clean check valve. A flood control system can fail, they require maintenance a few times a year as the check valve may not close all the way if there is debris that gets caught. She has not heard of anyone who has water in their basement with an overhead sewer system but that would also be the most expensive system.

President Bielinski noted that there was one more question from a resident.

Ms. Gondra said she is not against the money being spent but she wants to know that the flooding problem will be fixed.

President Bielinski said there is no guarantee but they are doing the best that they can from the consultant's recommendations.

Ms. McAllester said what other communities have realized is that stormwater takes a comprehensive approach to resolve. Communications need to flow between the Board, staff, the community, and plumbing experts. Would there ever be a community group the Board is willing to work with regarding all stormwater issues. In many communities, the only way they have made significant progress is by having a significant commitment amongst staff, the Board and the community to focus on stormwater.

Trustee Krueger thanked the Engineering Department and the engineers for their work and their presentation. When people say we are not making progress, I want them to look back and see the incredible progress we have made with water issues Village wide and we are getting closer to a livable situation.

Trustee Sullivan thanked staff and the consultants for doing a good job at this meeting and the last meeting. They brought up some very good capital issues for the Board to think about. It is going to get more expensive to live in Wilmette if we want to do some of these proposals and that is a hard thing for the Board to decide.

President Bielinski thanked the staff for all their work on the storm sewer system improvement discussions.

### **III. Adjournment**

Trustee Ducommun moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:40 p.m., seconded by Trustee Wolf. There was no further discussion on the motion. All voted aye, the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Hirsch  
Deputy Village Clerk