

# INI/drainage issue updates at Lewiston Town Board meeting

## Town officials discuss backflow preventer program

√ Lewiston youth baseball, summer camp registrations underway  
**BY TERRY DUFFY**  
 Editor-in-Chief

Questions over Lewiston's handling of inflow/infiltration, as well as drainage, resurfaced in active discussions at Monday's regular Town Board meeting.

In opening statements, resident Mark Elias of Morgan Drive recalled the Jan. 26 heavy precipitation event in the area, and noted \$1,000 in damages to his basement from sewage problems. He had questions about what the town is doing to address the issue.

"I am wondering what the town is doing with its wastewater treatment plant at this point to operate it, since we are adding more residents. It's obviously insufficient at this point," he said.

In response, Supervisor Steve Broderick spoke of an option discussed at the board's Feb. 12 work session with Jeff Ritter, superintendent of operations at the Lewiston Water Pollution Control Center.

"The town is looking into a backflow preventer grant program whereby the town reimburses homeowners up to certain dollar amount to be determined," he said.

Broderick said the town is looking into participating in that grant program to assist homeowners in acquiring the safeguard devices to protect their properties.

"The details haven't been sorted out, but basically you would put a backflow preventer into your house, and an inspection. We have to work out some details, (but) you would qualify or submit for a grant from the town to reimburse you."

Broderick said the potential cost to individual property owners could range from \$1,500 to \$2,500.

Another town project involves a significant upgrade at the Pletcher Road WPCC facility itself.

"We are updating SCADA, which is supervisory control and data acquisition. It's just moving the plant into the 21st century," Ritter said. He estimated the cost for improvements to be in the range of \$1.4 million for the town.

Broderick said that, for the immediate future, homeowners would have an option to install the aforementioned backflow preventer at their own cost. "Which would stop the sewage from coming back in. And we would reimburse you with a grant. That is one of the things we're looking at."

Broderick and Ritter explained the continuing problem for residents involves inflow and infiltration issues – the combining of ground and sewage water into the system, particularly during heavy precipitation events – that the Lewiston sewer district continues to work on. The district services property owners in the Town of

Lewiston, Village of Lewiston and Town of Porter, including the Village of Youngstown and Ransomville.

"The (clearing of ditches) is the main thing we can do right away," Broderick said. He told the resident the town was cleaning ditches in the West Park neighborhood of Morgan Farms this past week.

Ritter added, "A lot of what we call inflow and infiltration comes from private property. We would be happy to do an inspection of residences and see how we can protect those people, and it helps protect the neighbors. ... The drainage is already poor in Morgan (Farms), and when the water has no place to go it finds its way into the sewer system."

"We do not have a capacity issue; we have an inflow and infiltration problem," Ritter said. "That is something that we're constantly working on. We do this through lining of manholes, with pipe repair and most now comes from private property (drainage). We're doing everything we can to try to stop this."

"It will never stop, but we just try to get it where it would be manageable at a time when we're having flooding issues."

Broderick told the resident that INI problems are common in municipalities throughout Niagara County. Recalling the recent precipitation event where the region experienced heavy rains

combined with snowmelt, he said "the county sewer district almost had a complete failure. That day it happened everywhere in Western New York."

As to the town's plans for managing the cost of the \$1.4 million SCADA improvement project for the WPCC, a shared services facility in the River Region, "I can't use Greenway money to fix sewer stacks. Greenway money is specific money (for community enhancement projects)," Broderick explained. "The sewer district is different; it's four communities. It's not just the Town of Lewiston. ... It's a district within itself. So, the funds (for any improvements) have to come from within that district. The \$1.4 million is coming from fund balance in the sewer department."

Broderick said highway department crews have been working overtime to address the problem of clogged ditches that aggravate INI issues throughout the district.

Problem areas visited last weekend included Swann Road, Morgan Farms, Porter Center Road and Ransomville Road.

"We're on Creek Road right now," Highway Superintendent Mitch Zahno said. "We're going around to see where our worst spots are. We bought another machine; we're trying to get the ditches cleaned out, the biggest issue is the backed-up water. You just can't get to them."

"It's a countywide thing. We get the water moving, then it gets to Porter; they're not cleaned, then we have to stop. ... We're working with the county, the state, the DEC, trying to get this solved."

In the meantime, Ritter encouraged residents with any questions involving sewage problems to reach out to him at 716-754-8291 or jritter@townoflewiston.us.

Other newsmakers from the board session:

- The town announced two public hearings – one on the proposed Local Law No. 1 of 2024 covering short-term rental properties, the other being an extension of the moratorium on the town's 2023 solar law – would be held at 6 p.m. Monday, March 11, prior to the work session.

- Finance Director Jacqueline Agnello received board approval to pursue a cable franchise audit and a utility telecommunications audit on behalf of the town.

- Recreation Director Tim Smith announced registration for the 2024 youth baseball/softball programs is underway and continues to March 15. Spring practices are expected to begin the week of April 15. Smith also said registration for Lewiston's youth summer camp programs is ongoing.

For more information on these programs, visit the town Recreation Department links on Facebook.

## IN THE NEWS

### Registration open for 5th annual Niagara County Agribusiness Outreach Forum

The Niagara County Center for Economic Development announced it will host the 2024 Agribusiness Outreach Forum from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. Friday, March 15, at the Cornell Cooperative Extension Training Center, 4487 Lake Ave., Lockport. This is a free event, but attendees must register at <https://www.niagaracountybusiness.com/2024-agforum>.

"It's hard to believe this is already our fifth Agribusiness Forum and, each year, it seems to get bigger, with more participants and more presenters," said Michael Casale, Niagara County commissioner for economic development. "The fact is agribusiness is one of the most important sectors to the Niagara County economy, and it's also probably under the most duress. People come to this forum looking for information, assistance and a chance to express their concerns and issues."

During this event, participants will hear from industry experts

on a variety of topics including solar solicitation – know your rights; climate smart farming; planning for retirement in agriculture; protecting your farmland for the future; and technology and innovation in agriculture. There will be a number of tables set aside to learn more about the latest grants, incentives and resources available with information from agencies such as the Niagara County Center for Economic Development, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County, Niagara Small Business Development Center, NY FarmNet, Niagara County Farm Bureau, National Grid and the Niagara USA Chamber, among others.

In addition, there will be an opportunity to network with other attendees and agribusiness leaders and tour the Niagara County Veggie Van and the Oak Orchard Health Mobile Health Unit. Lunch will be provided by Beans' Smokehouse.

"Agriculture continues to be an important sector of Niagara

County's economy, but the most recent data released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture is very alarming," Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydysh said. "According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, there are 628 farms in Niagara County covering 121,516 acres, or about

36% of the total land mass in the county. That means we lost 62 farms and nearly 19,000 acres of farmland in the last five years. Forums like this and initiatives like our agricultural rights advisory panel are ways we can come together and support our agriculture industry."

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