

Inflow and infiltration complaints resurface in Lewiston

Heavy rains spur deluge at board session; town still looking into backflow preventer program

BY TERRY DUFFY
Editor-in-Chief

Complaints over the town's maintenance of drainage ditches and the related inflow and infiltration problems surfaced again at Monday's Lewiston Town Board following last week's heavy rains.

"I am deeply concerned about the recent flooding impacting my property," Morgan Drive resident Norm Nichols said. He has experienced basement flooding twice this year – and the problem was exacerbated during last week's 5-inch rainfall. He blamed the problem on clogged ditches in the Morgan Farms neighborhood.

"This issue forces water across the road, causing the ditches to back up and overflow," Nichols said. "There's tremendous water pressure, which pushes water into my basement along the service lines, the sewer and water lines, causing significant damage and rendering portions of my 1,100-square-foot basement unusable."

"Despite my efforts to fortify my property after the January incident, the drainage problem persists, damaging the value of my home and possibly causing it to go on the insurance flood map."

Nichols said he contacted the Lewiston Highway Department following the January incident and there has been little response. "I understand weather conditions have attributed (to this). But the core issue still remains resolved."

Discussing the problem, Nichols said a "robust pumping system, fully managed to manage the incoming water volume when the ditch fills, (is necessary) because of back pressure – (and) demonstrates the severity of this prob-

lem. Therefore, I urge this board to take immediate action. I request that all drainage lines associated with the ditch be promptly repaired to prevent further damage to my property and others in the area," or, alternatively, that the town fill in the ditch surrounding his property.

"The community deserves reliable protection to protect their property in such preventable disasters," he said.

Morgan Drive resident Dave Woodley said the town needs to take "drastic issues" to address the problem. He said he has personally witnessed as many as 60 residences affected by flooding from the January event and last week.

"We registered an astounding 5 inches of rain," Woodley said. "I've been on that street since 1985. I've seen people come (and go), and this ditch, being an ongoing issue ... the water could not vacate to the end of the street and into the river. On Morgan, we are completely blocked off; we had water backed up to my lawn."

"I think it's about time ... we take some drastic issues on this. I know people since the '90s on the 500 block (of Morgan) who have been flooded out. We're not getting any younger, and these people have to pay a lot of money for people to come by, take out all their wet rugs, their boxes (for disposal)."

"I witnessed at least another 20 homes that have been flooded out again. We need to address this situation. I myself am getting sick and tired of getting flooded out."

The town's flooding issues go beyond the Morgan Farms neigh-

borhood. Recent rains also affected residents in the Perry Court neighborhood, where Facebook posts showed residents paddling in kayaks down flooded streets. Other flooding complaints have come from Raymond Drive/Curtiss Court residents and from those in the Eddy Drive neighborhood.

In response, Jeff Ritter, superintendent of the Lewiston Water Pollution Control Center, said the town has been attempting to address the problem since the flooding in January.

"After this flooding, the supervisor suggested we (look into) the backflow preventer program for these recurring situations," he said. "We're trying to be proactive on this."

Supervisor Steve Broderick said the town has been looking into a grant program where the municipality would acquire the backflow preventer units and avail them to private residences affected by flooding. The units would address the issue of nasty backups from the town's sewer system into residences during heavy rain events. However, it would not address the problem of groundwater infiltration in basements from those same heavy rain events.

"It would be a grant program; we haven't decided on what that amount's going to be," Broderick said as to the cost to property owners. "Whatever the amount, (the property owner) would be responsible for the extra amount. We wouldn't pay 100% of that. I'm actually trying to contact a couple of plumbing companies to get an estimate on what that would do (with regard to cost)."

Broderick said cities such as

Albany and Hamilton (Ontario) both offer the inflow preventer program for their property owners. According to a Forbes Home Improvement report on the topic, "Installing a backflow preventer typically costs around \$325 per unit, varying from \$105 to \$1,400. This total cost encompasses the device's price and the labor needed for installation."

It continued, "Several factors, including the type of preventer being installed, the valve size, the condition of existing pipes and the permits needed, can all impact the cost of replacing a backflow preventer. Once installed, backflow preventers require regular maintenance and annual testing, which typically costs between \$100 and \$200."

Town Attorney Al Bax said, "We're trying to cherry-pick (to find) the best town policy" for offering the inflow preventer program to residents. "(But) I am concerned that backflow preventer will only impact the sewer, not groundwater infiltrations onto a property."

Ritter said, "Yes, I am not sure that 5 inches of rain over two hours" is going to help prevent this.

Meanwhile, the town approved more than \$100,000 in funding Monday for new piping for the Morgan neighborhood to address the problem.

In other news of note, the town announced it will hold a public hearing on Local Law No. 3 of 2024 covering solar installations in the town and Village of Lewiston. The hearing will be held Monday, July 22, prior to the board's regular session.

"(It's) a local law amending the zoning for the solar energy law" as it pertains to Sect. 360 of the said law," Councilman Rob Morreale said.

Bax said the measure would provide the town better management on future solar activities in Lewiston.

"As the board's aware, there is an amendment to be placed on solar projects," he said. "What this does is that it sets the areas (where) solar can be located. (It) also places (the responsibility) on the town on how these projects can be managed in the future, specifically with respect to screening and how the town (manages the operations) via any host community agreements it may execute with a solar provider."

"Obviously, it will allow the town to better manage these. It gives us a little flexibility and the opportunity to enforce" town code on zoning."



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The Youngstown Business and Professional Association's 14th annual Beginning of Summer Street Dance and Car Cruise got the summer season started on a steamy summer evening last Thursday. Main Street was filled with vendors, food, pony rides and activities for the kids, fire truck displays and live music by the Thurman Brothers. Hinman Street was lined with all sorts of cars, from classic and hot rods to modern. (Photos by Wayne Peters)



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