

**MINUTES OF THE SEWER SUBCOMMITTEE  
SHEFFIELD LAKE, OHIO**

**May 6, 2024**

[www.sheffieldlake.net](http://www.sheffieldlake.net)

This public meeting of the sewer subcommittee was held Monday, May 6, 2024  
Chairman Wtulich called the meeting to order at 6:45pm.

Chairman Wtulich says I want to thank Rick Schaffer from Ward 2, Matt Harper  
from Ward 3 and Ken Burns from Ward 4 for attending.

**DISCUSSION:** Service Director Hastings states I would like to explain some of the problem areas and why they are. If you are in the Knolls/Irving Park area, built in the 50's, all those properties had rear yard drains in them. Over the years, be it fences or landscaping, etc., those back yard drains have been removed or blocked. The problem is the city doesn't maintain those because they are on private property. New construction today requires back yard drains. They are put in and inspected, but then the maintenance of those becomes the homeowner's responsibility. You can have that same problem when you consider East and West Dr. There is actually drains in their back yards. There again, those have become a problem. The areas of Belle, Brockley, Knickerbocker and Holl, those are predominately the result of the day ditch. While we have cleaned that, I hope to bring hydraulic studies to this committee that would show the advantage of opening up those boxes. They are only the size of a desk. There is also other areas of town that have these backyard drains that I speak of, but I bring that up to start our conversation. When you get a call to the city or see a Facebook post saying my yard is flooding, that's really not a consequence of a failure of the city's maintenance, it's the fact that they're not getting their water to the front yard. These rear yard drains in my experience, are very ill maintained if existing at all. The other topic I would bring up is the idea of combined sewers. I'm often asked why we don't we undertake what Avon Lake did with the separation of sewers. The answer is because we actually do not have combined sewers. In Sheffield Lake, you either have a storm sewer or ditch. They never intended these drains to share the same pipe. For the most part, they don't. There is still a cross connection where I estimate thousands of homes are running their sump pumps into the sanitary sewer. The city can identify that through smoke techniques and dye testing, but it's an aggressive response by the city. If the city were to undertake this in neighborhoods and identify these cross connections, by our own ordinances they have about 14 days to correct it. You are talking about thousands of dollars on the homeowners. One solution is the city can try to get some funding for them. That's another discussion as far as how aggressive the city wants to get. Service Director Hastings describes a smoke test. Moving forward I would hope each of the wards would bring me some information that I could take back to my office and research

to try and get some answers. Chairman Wtulich asks don't we have plans to clean the Forest Lawn Ditch this year? What projects do we have going on? Service Director Hastings responds Forest Lawn Ditch is designed and it doesn't reach the threshold of public bidding, so our engineer will reach out to contractors that we have used in the past and do a request for proposals. The mayor has had me start the process of Shumacker Ditch. That's gonna be from Sheffield all the way behind Buckeye, through the new condominiums and out to the lake. That data is over 100 years old. The first process there is to actually do title researching on all the property. Unfortunately, the majority of it is private. All that is under contract with Network Title. Once that information is gathered, we will go out and notify all the property owners and begin surveying.

**Matthew Harper, 4146 Holl Ave.**, asks the ditch that butts up to the tracks, are they supposed to maintain that or is that us that is supposed to maintain it? Service Director Hastings replies that is railroad property. Mr. Harper says they used to maintain it; every 2-3 years they would dig it out. They haven't dug it out in maybe 10 years. What's the chance we could push them a little bit to get that dug out? It's been a long time. Service Director Hastings replies I agree. All we can do is ask. Mr. Harper says I cleaned out the area behind my house about 3 years ago. When we flooded on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August, that was all the way up to the top of my property and coming into my back yard. Service Director Hastings replies they should clean it to help. Mr. Harper asks have we finished going down Day Ditch and cleaning all that? Service Director Hastings replies there is a water main right through the middle of it that's exposed and is currently in design. We are sending it to the EPA to approve it.

Member DeBottis asks when you were talking about combination/cross sewers, if there is a home that doesn't have a sump pump and the rains come in and they get backed up with sewage, where is that coming from? Service Director Hastings replies that is because in earlier decades, installation of your footer tile was allowed to go into the sanitary sewer. Member DeBottis asks when the drain tiles tapped into the sanitary, what term is that considered? Service Director Hastings replies combined sewers could be your down spouts, yard drains, etc., as well as footers. Member DeBottis asks if the footers are connected to the sanitary, what would that be considered? Service Director Hastings responds that is now a cross connection. There are many homes that have basements with no sump pumps and in that case unfortunately, the connection is illegal. That is an example of where if they city got aggressive and did these smoke tests, the home owner would be forced to change it. Now, if we are not aggressive, the answer is a check valve. That would prevent the sanitary sewer from going back up into the house. Member DeBottis asks if 1, 2 or 3 houses do that, it's probably the whole street that's connected that way or am I incorrect? Service Director Hastings responds incorrect. You have houses from the 50's and 70's on the same street. Even if they are the same year, I've been in some that have sump pumps and some that don't. Member DeBottis asks how much extra water are we having run into Lorain

because of those types of connections and how much extra is our bill every month which has climbed considerably, correct? Service Director Hastings replies yes and I know every gallon that we treat. Member DeBottis asks but we don't know how many of those gallons are actual sewage gallons and rainwater gallons? Service Director Hastings replies actually, I do have analysis based on dry events vs. heavy rain. The city had the highest sanitary sewer bill I've ever seen with \$99,000 for one month this year when we had a pretty rainy month. Member DeBottis asks how many gallons went through? Service Director Hastings replies I would have to research, but I'm in the neighborhood of 35-40 million. Member DeBottis asks how much of that is clean rainwater getting in there? 20%, 40%? Service Director Hastings responds in a perfect world I can look at how many gallons we buy, which is averaging 700,000 gallons of fresh water a day, 28 million gallons a month and you should see about the same number in the sewer minus people doing yard/garden watering. The month we had a \$99,000 bill, our water usage was in the 27 million gallons range, yet we treated 35 million gallons of sewage. That's defining your infiltration. Member Gee says is there anyway, I know putting something in with the water bill explaining the cross connect doesn't necessarily mean it's gonna sink in or get anywhere. Has the city considered doing a few gatherings and discussing this? I know my seniors would love to have you come and explain this. I was wondering, granted for you to come and speak with the seniors, but other groups, maybe even sending something out with the kids. Something to get people to be a little more aware. Is there anything we can consider on that 2 week/14 days must be in compliance? Service Director Hastings responds that's a function of our ordinance committee. I assume the mayor's office would entertain more latitude if collectively we wanted to pursue these changes. Member Gee says I think it would be easier on the residents to be willing to be hey come test, if I know I've got more than 14 days to find someone and make them fix it. Service Director Hastings replies I agree. As far as communication, that's something we have been battling forever. We definitely have a lot of communication going now through our Facebook, website, newsletter. I have all this literature at our offices if you want it. I have it for backflow prevention, sanitary, cross connections and all of that. Maybe we need an avenue to get out the literature. Member Gee says we know Irving Park is an area, East/West Dr., Belle, Brockley, Lynne, Gayle, etc. what about trying to see if we can get boy/girl scouts or somebody to go door to door putting the literature in a bag on the doors? Service Director Hastings responds it's certainly a possibility. I would have to discuss it with the administration. Member DeBottis says eventually, this is all going to come to a head and it's either gotta be fixed one way or another. I think the first thing we may need to do is educate all of our citizens on how much extra our sewer bill is because of water infiltration. I think the main thing is to try to sell what we want to do in the long term to correct these problems. Service Director Hastings replies there are companies I have used in the past that could help us with education of the public and I can see if they are still in business.

*Tammy Asire, 648 Maplewood Ave.* says many years ago when my father was still alive and owned the house that I have now, they came out because the down spouts used to come in and go into a tile and out to the ditch. We were told those all had to be removed, which I know our house was done and our neighbor's house was done. Isn't there a simpler starting point to check some of these houses and see if their down spouts are still running in? That's a very inexpensive fix. Even if it's a 1,000 gallons a month you are stopping, that's a starting point. The other thing is talking about the back yard tiles, I know my parents and the people that owned the property behind them ran their own tiles and years later the fence ordinance got changed. When the new neighbors got ready to put in their fence, we tried to explain to them that you don't want to put the fence right on the property line because you will break the tile, which of course they did. I think there are some things where if you educate the people, but maybe start out with smaller/simpler fixes as they understand it and you can start showing a little progress, gives people more hope. If someone came to me and said they were going to charge me \$5,000 because the people on the next block over are running their down spouts into the sanitary, etc., when mine isn't, I'm not gonna be real awful happy.

Mr. Harper says I guarantee every house on Holl Rd. is cross connected and how is the city gonna say that they are gonna demand the houses to fix that when the city is the one that approved it to begin with? I guarantee the city looked at the whole scope of the thing and said that looks great to us, approved. How is that gonna happen? I went through and 7-8 houses we ran backflow preventers, dug up the whole yard and put the preventers in and saved us 2-3 floods. Then the last one was obviously so powerful that it pushed right through the preventer. Service Director Hastings asks you're implying that the city inspected and approved the cross connection? Mr. Harper replies I mean when the houses first went in, they city inspected everything and approved it, correct? Service Director Hastings responds you're talking about at the inception of the development in the 50's. I agree with you, but I'm telling you the laws have changed, the codes have changed. The city's not beating at the door now saying you're breaking the law, but if we want real solutions to this, that's part of the solution. Mr. Harper asks you said backflow would be part of the solution? So, those of us that put the backflows in should be ok to begin with? Service Director Hastings replies a backflow is very good insurance against the sanitary coming back at you, but as you know unfortunately it's not fool proof.

**MEETING ADJOURNED:** Chairman Wtulich adjourned the meeting at 7:14 pm.

**CLERK OF COUNCIL AFFIRMATION:** This Meeting Of The City Council Of The City Of Sheffield Lake, Ohio Was Held And Conducted Under All Rules And Regulations Governing The Sunshine Laws Of The State Of Ohio As They May Apply. All meetings are recorded and available in council offices.

---

**CLERK OF COUNCIL/COMMITTEES**

*Brandy Randolph*

I, Brandy Randolph, duly appointed Clerk of Council of Sheffield Lake DO HEREBY CERTIFY that this is a true and exact copy of the Minutes of the Sewer Subcommittee on May 6, 2024.

---

**COUNCIL PRESIDENT**

*Richard Rosso*

---

**MAYOR**

*Rocky Radeff*