

**Mill Woods Community Meeting
Regarding July 12 – 23, 2012 Flooding
Held October 1, 2012 at South Edmonton Alliance Church**

Consultation Summary

Attendance: 48

City of Edmonton Presenters:

- James Tan, Director of Drainage Planning, Drainage Services
- Derek Melmoth, Director of Drainage Services, Drainage Services

Presentation

Following introductions, the meeting opened with a presentation by Mr. Tan and Mr. Melmoth to update meeting participants on the information gathered on the July 2012 flooding in Mill Woods, as well as the work Drainage Services has done to date in response to the storm events.

Presentation highlights:

- The July 2012 storms were extremely intense over a short duration. The July 12 storm alone resulted in 2.4 million cubic metres of rainfall (2 ½ times the size of Commonwealth Stadium).
- A total of 1,752 Edmonton residents reported basement flooding – 502 of these reports came from Mill Woods.
- Drainage Services contacted Mill Woods homes that reported flooding to do on-site investigations. A preliminary assessment suggests the Mill Woods Double Barrel Trunk Sewers surcharged and backed up local sewer systems in both southwest and northwest Mill Woods neighbourhoods.
- Out of the reported basement flooding in Mill Woods, results suggest 30% were due to sanitary back-up; 10% due to private property issues (such as seepage, sump pumps, lot grading) and 60% have undetermined causes.
- A total of \$50 million has been committed to flood prevention in Mill Woods through the City's Flood Prevention Program (begun in 2004). The Mill Woods Double Barrel Tunnel Upgrade Project is 40% complete. Drainage Services expects to complete connection to the North Millbourne storm trunk sewer to the new storm tunnel next May. Entire project to be completed in 2014.
- Next steps are to conduct further evaluation and assessments and return to the community next spring with recommended options. After that, an expanded flood prevention program will be recommended to City Council for approval.
- The City's Home Check-up Program is free to all residents (single and multi-family units).
- The City has made an application to the provincial disaster relief fund. Unfortunately, no decision has been made yet, but the City should receive notification in the next few weeks.

Comments from Residents

A number of participants at the meeting expressed their frustration and disappointment that their (as well as their neighbours') sump pumps and backwater valves had failed to prevent flooding in their basements. One resident stated they had done everything they were asked to do in 2004 but were still flooded. Another spoke of the work he had done on his property to upgrade but suspects nothing could withstand the pressure of the water that was coming through the system. One resident asked how to keep your sump pump working during a power outage while others asked how it's possible to prevent flooding when you have a 'lake in front of your house.'

The most recent flooding events led a number of meeting participants to believe the problem in Mill Woods is systemic, rather than the result of issues on private property. One resident notes her research showed issues with the soil and drainage in Mill Woods were documented before development in the area even began. Other residents referred to the intense water pressure (windows blown in, manhole lids blown off) as evidence that something is wrong with the entire drainage system in Mill Woods. The frequency of intense storms in recent years led more than one participant at the meeting to dispute the issue as solely the result of 1 in 100 year storm event.

These systemic issues, many meeting participants believe, are making it more difficult to get insurance. Many expressed fears that they would not be able to get insurance in the future. A number of questions were asked about the provincial disaster relief fund, particularly eligibility and compensation amounts. The City committed to communicate information about the fund once approval from the province is given.

A number of meeting participants asked questions or offered suggestions on what could be done to improve the drainage system. A number of residents brought up the issue of plugged drains and asked how the City could ensure these are kept cleaned up, not just after a storm, but all the time to help prevent flooding as preventative maintenance. Another resident stated his belief that bigger pipes are needed because the City is 'defeated by the law of hydraulics.' Some residents had questions about how the dry ponds work and whether pumps are used. A City Councillor asked for clarification on how the tunnel upgrade would help the affected communities located some distance away.

While at least one resident stated his belief that the City is on the right track with the improvements, many expressed a desire to see any potential improvements move faster, to ensure flooding is prevented next summer.

A couple of residents spoke to the lack of information around the need to report flooding. While some sought clarification on who should report, others said they and their neighbours didn't see the point in reporting anymore. One resident stated he and his neighbours *had* reported, but the number of reports from his neighbourhood (potentially indicating a problem area) was not represented by the number of dots on the presented map.

A few of the meeting participants asked the City not to blame or infer that homeowners could have prevented the flooding on their own properties. The emotional stress caused

by the frequent flooding is only compounded by such implications it may be the homeowners' fault.

Other suggestions/comments

- What can the City do about surface drainage issues on private property?

Updates

Updates to residents on the improvement plans will be provided by direct mail or email for those who attended the meeting and others who are on the stakeholder list. It will also be communicated via the Community Leagues and through the website at www.edmonton.ca/floodprevention Additional comments or questions may be forwarded to Derek Melmoth at 780-496-5662 derek.melmoth@edmonton.ca or Fayi Zhou at 780-496-3006 fayi.zhou@edmonton.ca