

**Southwest Edmonton Communities Meeting
Regarding July 12 – 23, 2012 Flooding
Held October 11, 2012 at Richard Secord School**

Consultation Summary

Attendance: 75 (approx.)

City of Edmonton Presenters:

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

Presentation

Note: The following is a brief synopsis of the meeting's Powerpoint presentation. The full presentation is available on-line at www.edmonton.ca/floodprevention (click on Public Consultations).

Following introductions, Mr. Tan provided a summary of the July 2012 storm events. He noted that overall the storms in July were very intense and very localized over a short duration. 1,752 Edmonton residents reported basement flooding – 200 in southwest Edmonton. Mr. Tan then reviewed what Drainage Services had done since the July flooding to determine the nature and causes of basement flooding. The preliminary assessment suggests the existing storm trunk sewers surcharged and backed up local sewer systems in southwest neighbourhoods.

Out of the reported basement flooding in southwest Edmonton, results suggest 16% were due to sanitary back-up; 24% were due to private property issues (such as seepage, sump pumps, lot grading) and 60% have undetermined causes. Drainage Services is still trying to determine the remainder of the causes. Mr. Tan emphasized residents can help by letting Drainage Services know how they were flooded.

Since 2006, a total of \$67 million has been committed to flood prevention in southwest Edmonton. These projects are in various stages of design and construction. Next steps are to conduct further evaluation and assessments, and return to the community next spring with recommended improvement options. After that, an Expanded Flood Prevention Program will be recommended to City Council for approval.

Mr. Melmoth informed attendees that Drainage Services has a Home Check-up Program that is free to all residents. The program has been expanded to multi-family units. He mentioned the backflow valve subsidy program and confirmed that the City's application to the province for disaster relief has been approved, for flooding events that occurred on July 12, 15 and 18. The approval means that a portion or all of a homeowner's qualified uninsurable losses may be paid for by the province.

Comments and Questions

Many of the attendees who came to the meeting had questions about the situation specific to their own neighbourhoods – both in terms of the status of work being done and what, specifically, would have caused the flooding in their local area.

The most frequent questions were raised in relation to Aspen Gardens. Reacting to the information that had been presented on the map, attendees wanted to know what repair and maintenance work had actually been done to prevent flooding in their neighbourhood and what priority is being placed on it now. Mr. Tan stated that Aspen Gardens was not as badly affected in 2004 as other neighbourhoods and not included in the first round of improvements.

In the most recent storms, Aspen Gardens residents complained of sewer back-up and backwater valves not performing. One resident spoke of making all the improvements they believed were required since 2004, including installing a sump pump, only to find their basement flooded again. Other residents echoed this comment, saying on-site flood prevention measures did not seem to prevent the flooding they experienced this year. Mr. Tan confirmed Drainage Services' preliminary assessment that sanitary back-up had occurred in Aspen Gardens during the recent storms and that the neighbourhood is a priority to study and determine what flood prevention improvements are needed.

Malmo Plains residents wanted to know the status of work being done in that neighbourhood given the number of red dots on the map. Mr. Tan confirmed a dry pond had been built with land secured from the University of Alberta. He noted that although the occurrence of sanitary back-up has lessened in Malmo Plains, Drainage Services is still investigating why so many houses flooded in that area.

A resident from Westbrook stated that he and his neighbours had sustained major damage to their homes and wanted to know what action would be taken there. Mr. Melmoth confirmed surface drainage issues from a nearby golf course had affected the area and that Drainage Services is currently working with the owners to resolve it. He also noted there would be provincial relief for the damage.

Mr. Tan agreed with several residents who observed that flooding appears to be under-reported due to the few number of dots on the map shown during the presentation. He emphasized the need for individual residents to report flooding so that appropriate investigations can be done into the causes and help to inform what improvements should be made. In response to several questions, Mr. Melmoth spoke of the value of the Home Check-up Program individual consultations to provide people with advice specific to drainage issue on their properties.

One resident asked about the effectiveness of dry ponds, since they often appear empty and she can see school children playing in them. Mr. Tan explained that dry ponds are designed to fill and drain very quickly in response to a surcharge, so depending on when people drive by they may indeed be empty. He confirmed the Lendrum pond has a sensor on it that confirms it is working. There are plans to install a sensor on the Malmo pond.

A few meeting participants raised questions about the insurance that would be provided through the Provincial Disaster Recovery Program, including how that might affect future insurance premiums. Since it is a provincial program, these questions could not be answered by City representatives but residents were encouraged to apply.

Over the course of the meeting, several meeting participants expressed their appreciation for the work the City is doing and to Councillor Iveson for responding to resident concerns and keeping them informed of developments.

Other suggestions/comments

- Stop thinking about Edmonton as a ‘winter city’ when making decisions on programs and budgets. It’s time to see ourselves as ‘harsh weather city.’ It’s unacceptable to accept a certain level of flooding as part of the service standard.
- What is going to be the tax impact of doing improvement work?
- Keep a complete record of calls so that I don’t have to explain the entire history of my property every time I call.

Updates

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