

**Lynnwood Community Meeting Regarding June 15, 2006 Flooding
held July 4, 2006 at Lynnwood Hall**

Consultation Summary

Attendance: 84

Representatives from Drainage Services:

- Douwe Vanderwel, Senior Engineer & Flood Prevention Project Leader for west Edmonton, Drainage Services, City of Edmonton
- Derek Melmoth, General Supervisor, Public Services, Drainage Services
- Chris Ward, Director of Planning, Drainage Services

Presentation

Following introductions, Mr. Vanderwel provided an overview of the drainage system in the Lynnwood area. He noted that sewage from new communities west of Lynnwood flow through a major trunk line north of the community and not through it. Stormwater in new communities are captured in stormwater lakes and therefore does not put added pressure on the Lynnwood storm system.

He then reviewed what Drainage Services has done since the June 15 flooding to determine why 46 homes reported flooding in such a concentrated area of Lynnwood. He noted this concentration was a significant concern because there was relatively little flooding elsewhere in Edmonton. Both sanitary and storm pipes were checked in the affected area using closed circuit television and other methods. Drainage specialists contacted every home that reported flooding to do an on-site investigation. They were able to arrange visits to 85% of the homes and will follow up to complete the rest.

Mr. Vanderwel noted a detailed sewer system engineering study in west Edmonton was completed in 2005 because of the July 2004 floods that occurred. This study found that portions of the Lynnwood sanitary systems had reduced capacity because of wet weather inflow. The more recent investigation showed grease and tree roots partially blocked a sanitary pipe, causing sewer back-up up the line and into basements. One manhole also had poor hydraulics, causing further backup. June 15 flooding caused by stormwater was caused in part by poor lot grading and other drainage limitations on private property as well as more tree roots in the storm drain leading to the Lynnwood Trunk.

Mr. Melmoth said his investigators confirmed some backwater valves had failed during the recent flooding. Most failures were due to lack of maintenance or improper installation. Three are still being studied to determine why they failed.

By meeting time, most of the pipes in the area had been inspected and cleaned out. The remainder will be done in the near future, said Mr. Vanderwel. A more frequent maintenance schedule for Lynnwood will be put in place to ensure pipes remain free of debris. He noted homeowners could help by putting grease in the garbage and not down the sink or toilet. The two main system upgrades planned by Drainage Services to reduce the risk of flooding in the future in Lynnwood are:

- Build a new sanitary sewer line from 79A Avenue to 87 Avenue along 152 Street. It would be connected to the 87 Avenue tunnel.
- The Lynnwood Storm Trunk is being increased in size at two locations. The outlet drain for the Lynnwood Ravine is being increased in size so that it will drain more quickly. An overflow spillway will be constructed on the ravine outlet to prevent waterlevels from reaching the same high level as in 2004.

In addition, the manhole with poor hydraulics will be rebuilt. Mr. Vanderwel said these projects are high priorities. He explained a \$146 million funding package and implementation plan for a flood prevention program involving 43 neighbourhoods is to be considered by Council on July 5. A portion of the funding for the package will come from a provincial infrastructure grant. The remainder would come from utility rates paid for by all users, not just residents in affected neighbourhoods. Design work on Lynnwood improvements is underway but a schedule for construction would depend on funding approval by Council. Regardless, sewer pipe improvements would not be done this year.

Mr. Melmoth reminded homeowners that Drainage Services has staff and programs that can help improve drainage systems on private property. In addition to home visits, he offered any flooded home a free smoke and dye test and/or closed circuit televising of their sewer line connection (upon request) to ensure that the line is in good working condition. One flooded home had a collapsed sewer line and there may be others, he noted.

Comments from Residents

A number of people at the meeting were upset that their backwater valves failed even though they had been inspected and passed. Mr. Melmoth said many failures were due to improper or no maintenance, not the installation of the device. In other situations, it is possible the inspection could not check less obvious aspects of the installation that would affect the performance of the valve, such as grade or proper clamping of joints. One person noted her valve was put in the wrong location but it took three visits by City staff to notice it. In response to a question, Mr. Melmoth said there are a number of types of backwater valves. Homeowners should ensure the one that is installed is CSA approved.

Some meeting participants felt sagging sewer lines, reverse flows or the sanitary pump station in Laurier Heights was partially to blame for the flooding. Others felt new subdivisions west of Lynnwood were adding too much pressure to the local system. Mr. Vanderwel said these potential issues have all been studied. No evidence has been found of excessive sagging lines or reverse flows. The pump station's operation has no effect on Lynnwood as any overcapacity flow is vented at the pump station. West Edmonton neighbourhoods have their sewage flow directed around and to the north of Lynnwood, not through it.

Some questions were asked about the swale to be developed at the beginning of the ravine and whether swale overflow would send stormwater toward houses. Mr. Vanderwel said it would be designed so any overflow is unlikely. If there were overflow, it would be directed away from homes and onto parkland along Whitemud Drive.

There were a number of people who said they have significant pooling of water or poor catch basin drainage on their street or in the back alley. One person said the grading along Lynnwood Way was poor. Mr. Vanderwel invited residents to provide specific information about problem locations like these so they can be investigated and remedial action taken.

One person asked if the City will drop property taxes for homeowners who see their home insurance go up because of flooding. While dropping property taxes is not something that can be decided by Drainage Services, Mr. Ward noted they have proposed that funding for system improvements come from utility user fees and be shared by all utility customers across the City. The average amount being proposed is \$2.50 per month per customer.

There were a number of questions about how far the pipe inspections went (i.e. did they go beyond Lynnwood?), whether there are cross connections causing problems, about current and future pipe size and capacity, and whether additional work will be needed after the main improvements are made. For example, it was suggested more catch basins were needed on 84 Avenue, between 151 Street and 153 Street.

Mr. Vanderwel explained more investigation is needed but Drainage Services is confident that the recommended improvements will alleviate the capacity problems that currently exist in Lynnwood. More catch basins or regrading may be needed to help drain local pools of water. Any cross connections or further blockage that is found in the system will be removed.

Mr. Vanderwel noted that the proposed drainage system improvements along with some others would benefit other parts of Lynnwood, not just those who live in the southern part of the neighbourhood. A summary of a November 2005 presentation to the Elmwood/Lynnwood communities about all elements contained in the plan for these two neighbourhoods can be found at www.edmonton.ca/floodprevention

In response to a question, Mr. Ward indicated residents who want to ask the City to pay for their insurance deductibles should contact City of Edmonton Legal Services. Another person asked if she should refinish her basement or wait. She was told that while her reluctance to do so before system improvements are made was understandable, that was an individual decision that could not be made for her.

When asked how long improvements might take, Mr. Vanderwel said pipeline construction would not begin until at least 2007.

Other suggestions/comments

- There should be better communication about meetings like this. The community league can help spread the word.
- Many people do not know about your programs. The City should not wait to be called but take the initiative and go from house to house to inspect lot grading, backwater valves, sump pumps, configuration of servicing, etc.

- The project should start as soon as possible and carry on throughout all seasons of the year.
- The City's grading and sewer systems are to blame because I have a new house with good drainage and still got flooded. Recommending proper lot grading and regularly checking backwater valve is putting the blame on residents, when it is actually the City's fault.

Updates

Updates to residents on the improvement plans will be provided via direct mail for those who attended the meeting, the Lynnwood Community Newsletter and Drainage Services' website at www.edmonton.ca/floodprevention. Additional comments or questions may be forwarded to Mr. Vanderwel at 496-5553 or douwe.vanderwel@edmonton.ca