



## SEWER REHAB PROJECT LAUNCH AND THE FUTURE

In the coming weeks we will be launching our Sanitary Sewer Rehab Project, funded by a State Water Infrastructure (SWIF) Grant with matching funds from the city's ARPA funds. We will spend a total of \$4.1 million on sanitary sewer improvements designed to replace or rehabilitate sanitary sewer mains, manholes and service laterals in the right of way.

The goal is to address aged and deteriorated infrastructure as well as reduce inflow and infiltration of clear water into the system, which takes up capacity intended for sewage, impairs system performance and leads to sanitary sewer overflows. These overflows occur during rain events or due to mechanical or electrical issues with lift stations or grinder pumps. They are also a violation of the Clean Water Act. Our ongoing violation of the CWA have now resulted in two regulatory actions from the EPA. Interested persons can find more information about this project on the city's website in the City News section.

Although the SWIF/ARPA-funded project is a step in the right direction, it falls far short of the amount of work that is required to address all the problem areas affecting the sanitary sewer system. At present, we have a list of improvement projects amounting to roughly \$32-million that were contained in the recommended repairs under the first order. We were unable to complete these improvements because of inadequate funding of the sewer utility. We prioritized these improvements to have the most effect in reducing and eliminating sources of clear water that cause overloading of the sewer system resulting in overflows. However, many other repairs, replacements and other capital needs hit the sewer utility's budget on a regular basis.

We also are subject to the normal increases in routine operations and maintenance costs. This is where the 2009 increase, in my opinion, did not go far enough in addressing all the sewer utility's needs. Especially given the fact that we were under an EPA Order that required not only the elimination of SSO's, but also that we operate and maintain the system properly on a routine basis. This relates to having adequate staffing levels, proper equipment and service/maintenance vehicles, to implement and maintain adequate preventive maintenance levels. When you factor in the fact that there have been no sewer rate increases since then, the inadequate funding problem becomes more obvious.



In 2016, our water utility was in a severely degraded financial condition that required swift action. Starting in 2016, we worked to assess all the various operational and infrastructure issues facing the water utility, conducted a water rate study, and began communicating these issues to our customers and city leaders. In 2017, the water rates were increased, bond ratings upgraded, and we received a State Revolving Fund loan to finance our Phase I Water

System Improvements program, which is now complete.

We are now, with a private bond issue, in the process of completing Phase II of our Water System Improvements Project. This represents about \$22-million in improvements to our 3 water treatment plants, wells, water storage facilities and thousands of feet of water main replacement. Our ongoing water main replacement project, funded with the working capital component of our budget, is going strong. To date, we have spent upwards of \$30-million between the Phase I & II improvements projects and the annual main replacement program.

Our intent was to replicate this very successful turnaround of the water utility by following the same process with the sewer utility. The plan was to submit a rate increase recommendation to the Utility Service Board and Council by mid-2020, to be effective January 1, 2021. However, the pandemic intervened and resulted in our having to delay the process. We are now at a point where further delay places the sewer utility at risk of non-compliance with the new EPA order and inability to properly operate and maintain the sewer utility for the benefit and well-being of our customers and community.

Thus, it is imperative that we act soon to invest in our sewer utility for the benefit of our community with respect to the public health and safety (sanitary sewer overflows), system performance and reliability and for continued economic growth and prosperity of the city. You can see our presentation of the rate study and recommendations to the Utility Service Board at the May 24th Special Meeting on the city's facebook page.

## IMPORTANT INFO ON IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

This time of year, many residents and businesses activate irrigation systems.

Customers with these systems should be aware that State law requires that these systems have approved backflow devices installed and that these devices must be tested and certified by a tester who is licensed/certified by the State of Indiana to

perform these tests. The Utility is required to implement and monitor this program.

You may also schedule a test through Lawrence Utilities, who have certified testers on staff. The utility will place the test cost of \$80 on your utility bill as a miscellaneous charge. Failure to comply with testing and reporting requirements may result in ser-

vice disconnection. Submit test reports to Lawrence Utilities at [backflow@cityoflawrence.org](mailto:backflow@cityoflawrence.org).

If you have any questions or concerns about a test report, or to schedule a test, please contact the Business Office at 317-542-0511 and follow the prompts for Customer Service.

## FATS, OILS & GREASES (FOG) MAINTENANCE

The introduction of fats, oils and grease (FOG) into the sanitary sewer system will cause clogs and backups not only in customer service lines, but in the public mains as well. Not just businesses create grease-related problems in the sewer system. Parties discovered to have intentionally introduced these substances, or have done so by not properly maintaining grease traps or interceptors, are responsible for the cost of any required special cleaning or other corrective action undertaken by the sewer utility. They may also be responsible for any regulatory action or penalties resulting from a grease-caused sanitary sewer overflow.

Following are some tips for handling fats, oils and greases (FOG) that the city's sanitary sewer ordinance prohibits. Restaurants, commercial kitchens and other businesses such as automotive repair facilities must install and properly maintain grease interceptors and grease traps per City ordinance

- ▶ Monitor outside grease traps regularly and clean them when FOG reaches 25% of the grease trap depth.
- ▶ Monitor inside grease traps monthly and clean them at least once every three months.
- ▶ Dispose of waste cooking oil (deep fryer oil) through an established recycling company and never down the drain.
- ▶ "Dry wipe" pots, pans and dishware before washing to minimize the discharge of FOG and solids.
- ▶ Dispose of food wastes by solid waste removal or composting rather than using garbage disposals.
- ▶ Verify all grease interceptor cleaning and maintenance activities by a manager or supervisor to ensure that the device is operating properly.
- ▶ Keep a log of maintenance activities to help demonstrate compliance with local ordinances.

While many of the above practices are mainly for businesses, household FOG management is similar in that the goal is

to prevent FOG from getting in the sewer system. Wiping greasy pots and pans with paper towels and disposing of in the trash as well as collecting grease in a receptacle with a tight-fitting lid and disposing of in the trash are simple steps that homeowners can take to reduce the adverse impact of FOG on the city's sewer system.



## 4TH FEST IS AROUND THE CORNER!

Our 4th of July fireworks display will return during City of Lawrence 4th Fest 2022 at Lawrence Community Park!

Join us Monday, July 4 starting at 10am. Our Parade Grand Marshall Jack Keefer will kick off the morning events with the 4th Fest Parade, Classic Car Show, and Kiwanis Club Fish Fry. The Food Truck & Music Festival will start at 6pm with a performance by Jennifer Mlott.

At 7pm, Big Rosco & The Hammers will take the stage and play until the fireworks show begins around 10pm.

To apply to participate in the parade or to become a food vendor go to: [visitlawrenceindiana.com/events/4thfest](http://visitlawrenceindiana.com/events/4thfest)

