
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

July 23, 2010

Ald. Jim Bohl
(414) 286-2219

City of Milwaukee Task Force Proposed to Study Flooding

Ald. Jim Bohl, along with other members of the Common Council, will introduce legislation Tuesday that would create new panel

On Tuesday (July 27) the Milwaukee Common Council is expected to vote on creating a task force to look at key flooding issues, including basement sewage backups and possible remedies for homeowners (including offering incentives for sewer backflow preventer valves), excessive flooding of streets and alleyways, and the overall capacity of the city's sewer and storm water systems.

The task force, proposed by **Alderman Jim Bohl**, would include members representing the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, the city's Department of Public Works, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, Council members appointed by Common Council President Willie L. Hines, Jr., and an appointee of Mayor Tom Barrett.

The alderman, whose 5th District on the city's northwest side includes hundreds of homes and businesses inundated with basement backups caused by the storms last night and last week, said the task force will also look at possible requirements for new construction to ensure those structures are safeguarded from flooding and are not taxing the system.

"For three years in a row, we've seen storms that have simply overwhelmed our storm water and sewer systems, causing awful damage and destruction to homes and businesses," he said. "But it's my belief – and there are studies also supporting my belief – that this weather pattern goes back some 20 years, and that it may have ties to climate change or other factors."

"But to do nothing is unacceptable, and it's my belief we need the task force to sort out what changes need to be made to address the system problems and inefficiencies that have become painfully obvious in recent years and especially this past week," he said.

-More-

Flooding Task Force/ADD ONE

Other Council members who are co-sponsoring the proposal for the task force include Alderman Michael J. Murphy, Alderman Ashanti Hamilton, Alderman Willie C. Wade, and Alderman Nik Kovac.

Alderman Murphy said he is supportive of an in-depth review of the entire MMSD-city system. “A comprehensive review needs to be completed based on the intensity and frequency of the storms we’ve experienced during the past several years,” he said. “A key question is whether the system needs to be upgraded to a different capacity.”

Last week, following the basement backup and flooding problems caused by the deluge of July 14-15, Alderman Bohl requested city legislation that would provide \$100 rebates to eligible homeowners who install backflow preventer valves in their basement floor drains. He also called on the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District to provide a matching preventer valve incentive program, and is advancing discussion on creating a requirement that downspouts be disconnected from the system on homes located in areas of Milwaukee and Shorewood with combined sewers.

Alderman Bohl said he’s read several research pieces that suggest the heavy rainfall trend will not only continue in Milwaukee, but that it is also likely to worsen. For instance, there’s a University of Wisconsin Extension study that clearly shows a statistically significant increase in Milwaukee precipitation -

http://wicci.wisc.edu/uploads/Climate_Change_-_High_Water_talk_5-11-10.pdf

A 2008 climate assessment by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests the Midwest will be hit hard by “flooding and extreme weather” that will threaten economies, homes, and key infrastructure - http://www.epacliimatereport.com/?page_id=20

In the 2009 study “Confronting Climate Change in the U.S. Midwest” issued by the Union of Concerned Scientists, Milwaukee is forecast to receive continued heavy rainfall.

The report states: “*Milwaukee is projected to experience a 50 percent increase in heavy rainfalls (defined as more than two inches of rain in one day) over the next few decades. Toward the end of the century, heavy rainfalls are projected to occur twice as often.*”

To read the report, go to http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/global_warming/climate-change-wisconsin.pdf

The Common Council meeting on Tuesday, July 27 will start at 9:00 a.m. in the third floor Council Chamber at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.