

Sewer laterals must be replaced

Written by SARAH McCRAW
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Twenty-one Main Street homeowners required to replace lines; village and contractor to foot the bill

Construction crews will return to nearly two dozen homes along Main Street in Belgium to replace sanitary sewer lines that were incorrectly installed during the summer, village officials said last week.

Village President Richard Howells told trustees at the Feb. 20 Finance and Personnel Committee meeting that lateral pipes leading from the main sewer line to 21 homes in the 400 to 800 blocks of Main Street do not comply with state code and must be replaced.

That means the affected homeowners can expect work to be done in their basements, Public Works Director Dan Birenbaum said. Accessing sewer laterals through basements is less expensive than excavating yards and repairing landscaping, he said.

“It’s an inconvenience to the homeowners that we have to go back in and rip up everything,” Birenbaum said.

Residents were charged between \$1,200 and \$1,600 each for the installation of new laterals this summer as part of the sewer work associated with the reconstruction of Main Street.

Homeowners will not have to pay for the replacement of laterals, village officials said, but it’s uncertain who will or how much the work will cost. The village may contribute \$10,000 to the project.

Lamers Construction, which was involved in the initial project, has committed to paying between \$25,000 and \$30,000 because it is responsible for the polling of the laterals and should have noticed the six-inch lines in homes, Howells said.

“To do all of these houses, we don’t know an exact figure and we won’t know until they go in and inspect what kind of work they have to do to rectify this,” Howells said. “Each house is going to be different.”

A state plumbing inspector spotted the problem in September, Birenbaum said.

Old laterals that were six inches in diameter were replaced with four-inch pipes. State code does not allow larger laterals to be replaced with smaller ones, Birenbaum said.

Howells said the village applied for a variance from the state, but received a letter denying that request a few weeks ago. Trustee Jason Acevedo questioned why the village should have to help pay for the repairs when the village’s engineer, McMahon Associates, should have noticed the problem during construction.

Birenbaum said the village made the decision to use the four-inch laterals at homes, but

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Acevedo argued the on-site inspector from McMahon should have known about state code.

“We contracted with McMahon to have an inspector sit on the job site,” Acevedo said. “That’s what these inspectors are suppose to be there to catch, so that we don’t have to pay these expenses.”

Matt Greely of McMahon Associates said it’s standard procedure for four-inch laterals to be used and there is often a discrepancy between the materials used and state code.

“Changing from a six to a four-inch connection has been standard procedure in the industry because the six-inch lines are much too large from a hydraulic standpoint,” Greely said.

Sewer work done over the summer affected about 100 homes on Main Street between Lilac and LarAnn streets.

About 80 other homes that had sewer work done had the proper four-inch laterals connected, Greely said.

A state inspector will be on hand for the repairs to make sure the replacements are done correctly.

Trustees voted unanimously to recommend the additional payment to Don Hietpas & Sons Inc. The issue now goes before the Village Board, which has 30 days to notify the state of how and when the repairs will be made.