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Fredonia Avenue residents have plenty of questions after learning connections could cost thousands of dollars

Fredonia Avenue residents are facing the reality that they may have to pay thousands of dollars for sewer line reconstruction work on their property

Nearly 40 residents listened to a short presentation by Director of Public Works Roger Strohm during a public meeting Thursday, Aug. 23. Several residents asked questions regarding the project that will affect about 25 properties on Fredonia Avenue.

On-site inspections of laterals with a specialized camera is required of all homes along Fredonia Avenue, Strohm said, adding that residents will not be charged for the inspections, which are set to begin in October.

If a lateral connecting a property to a sewer main shows signs of damage, such as sagging pipes, changes in diameter, or roots that have broken through, the lateral will be replaced with PVC pipe and the cost of the work will be charged to the property owner.

The replacement work may cost an estimated $2,500 per property.

Reducing infiltration of storm water into the sanitary sewer system and reducing sewage overflows are the main reasons for repairing the plumbing, Strohm said.

“Eliminating those factors will reduce sanitary sewer overflows that’s sewage going into your basements or streets and into nearby rivers,” Strohm said.

John Depies of 250 Fredonia Ave. asked if the amount of infiltration has been measured.

“We look at (the amount of drinking water) pumped into the village and what’s treated at the plant. Any excess water that’s treated has to be from leakage. There’s no other way for it to get in,” Village Trustee Don Dohrwardt said, noting the additional influx is as high as 50% of the load at the treatment plant.

“We’re spending a lot of money treating clean water that doesn’t need to be treated. If it mixes with sewage, then we have to treat it. If we get clean water that doesn’t need to be treated out of there we’re saving money in the long run, and how much we need to charge residents will go down,” Dohrwardt said.

Strohm said replacing pipes will cause minimal damage to properties and take about a half day at each home. Crews will dig a two foot hole in the basement of each home and feed the new piping through the ground until it meets the street.

“If for some reason we have to dig a hole in the middle of your yard, it will be up to the contractor to repair the damage to your property. We will not leave you with a hole in your yard,” Strohm said.

Roger Janke, 218 Fedonia Avenue, said, “I don’t think the people in here disagree that this needs to be done. I think what you’re skipping is the $2,500 number. Where did that come from?”

Village President Chuck Lapicola explained that the projected cost is based on a cost of $25 per foot to replace the laters, with the majority of homes having a lateral pipe that stretches about 100 feet, he said.

Lapicola said the village is aware that residents, seniors especially, may be unable to pay for the work up front.

“We’re looking into the option of residents being able to put a contract lean on their property, so when they sell the property down the road it would get paid,” Lapicola said. “If it comes down to you paying for medication or the $2,500 project, your medication should come first.”

Dohrwardt said, “That would have to be an extreme case, we don’t want to be a banker for everybody, but we will consider it.”

A three or five-year payment plan could be added on to property taxes as another option, Lapicola said.

Scott Hollrith of Hollrith Realty, who owns a duplex on Fredonia Avenue, asked how the project would affect someone who wanted to sell their property.

“If someone wants to sell their house before the project is done, how you would disclose that to the realtor?” Hollrith asked.

Dohrwardt said, “the seller would have to disclose that this is coming and they would give much the same information we’ve provided.”

The new PVC sewer laterals will be replacing clay or ductile steel lines that are decades old.

Copies of the sewer lateral videos will be available to property owners upon request.

“Televising it will arm the engineers with what that situation is. Each home owner will understand what needs to be done with their individual land. We can then discuss alternatives with each person on the property,” Dohrwardt said.