



## **Four Mile Run Neighborhood Projects: Sewer/Water/Stormwater Virtual Community Meeting Minutes 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 30, 2021**

The 60 meeting participants included local residents, project stakeholders, and representatives from community organizations, nonprofits, and government agencies.

Councilman Corey O'Connor, City Council District 5 welcomed the participants to the meeting and provided a brief overview of the PWSA's projects in the Four Mile Run watershed. Councilman O'Connor mentioned interest in learning more details from PWSA about Four Mile Run project funding.

Tony Igwe, Senior Stormwater Group Manager described the meeting agenda then explained how PWSA's original mission for providing drinking water and sewer conveyance services to Pittsburgh was recently expanded to include stormwater management. Tony shared the goals and benefits of the combined Four Mile Run project: 1) Longevity of critical water and sewer infrastructure; 2) Resiliency of infrastructure and water quality; 3) Reduce combined sewer overflows; 4) Reduce flood risk; 5) Manage sediment and operational costs; and 6) Leverage resources for regional benefit.

Mallory Griffin, Water/Wastewater Section Head at Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson (JMT) provided an overview of the M-29 outfall improvements. M-29 is the name of the Four Mile Run combined sewershed. The M-29 culvert is in serious need of repair. The improvements will rehabilitate the outfall pipe to the Monongahela River and build an entirely new end wall with a metal flap gate to stop the river water from backing up into the combined sewer system. This M-29 outfall project will start the reduction of flooding up by Big Jim's. The M-29 outfall project construction is expected to start in late May and continue through late October 2021. Construction will include a daily lane closure on Second Ave with limited detours on nights and weekends. Other than traffic impacts, the rest of the construction is mostly underground. This is the first project that will be built as part of the overall Four Mile Run project; the next will be the large diameter water relocation.

Diane McConnell, Project Manager at JMT provided an overview of the Four Mile Run large diameter water relocation. Due to the age of the existing 50-inch water main and the utility conflicts for the stormwater project, PWSA will construct a relocated water main from the Run neighborhood up to Panther Hollow Lake. Permit applications for the water main relocation are expected to be submitted in the next month. The water main construction is expected to take place November 2021 to September 2022 and be coordinated with the stormwater project.

Mallory provided an update on Four Mile Run stormwater improvements in the Run neighborhood, which are expected to start soon after the water main relocation project begins. The improvements include a new underground stormwater pipeline to the Monongahela River and new separated storm sewer pipe and inlets in the Run neighborhood. There will be traffic impacts and detours while PWSA completes the heavy construction work. The construction work will also relocate a 16-inch water main in Saline and Boundary Street and an 8-inch water main in Boundary Street. People's Gas will also be

moving and replacing gas mains in Saline, Alexis, Boundary, and Four Mile Run Road, which is expected to start this summer. The stormwater project is waiting on final approvals from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) and Army Corps of Engineers Joint Permit Application (JPA), the Panther Hollow Lake Dam Safety permit, and the CSX railroad permit.

Tony provided an overview of the stormwater project construction schedule, costs, and funding. The stormwater project is expected to begin in fall 2021 and be completed in summer 2023 and will be split into phases. The permitting process may still impact these dates. The total project cost is approximately \$36.1 million. In order to build the \$11 million stormwater pipeline in an area of large scale with utility conflicts, many other projects with lots of design, modeling, permitting, and construction need to be completed. The utility conflicts also limited the size of the stormwater pipe that could be installed in the area, and therefore the cost of the pipe. In addition, PWSA had to consider the level of service for flooding for this project compared to what PWSA could provide for other areas in the City of Pittsburgh that experience similar levels of flooding.

A recording of the presentation and the following discussion is available at [www.pgh2o.com/4mr](http://www.pgh2o.com/4mr).

### Discussion

- Question: What would the traffic impact on Hazelwood be in this summer? We are trying to get traffic down to the new Hazelwood Green.
  - Answer: We are going to have a lane closure on Second Ave during the week, but there will still be two-way traffic at all times during the week. There may be some increased traffic by the Hazelwood Green site because of the weekend and evening detours. We are not allowing the contractor to park construction vehicles at the Hazelwood Green site.
- Question: Are all the costs on PWSA, or will ALCOSAN, the utilities, others picking up portions of the costs Tony detailed?
  - Answer: ALCOSAN is a major partner on these projects. The costs upfront are PWSA costs, but there is a potential to recover some of that through ALCOSAN's GROW funding for parts of the stormwater pipeline and stream project. ALCOSAN may also be participating in a partnership for the outfall – that is being worked out with PWSA. We started coordinating with People's Gas way ahead of time, and they are re-laying those pipes at no cost to PWSA.
- Question: Can you discuss how your project lines up with connection of walking and bike trails and also the Mon "connector" between Oakland and Hazelwood? Thank you.
  - Answer: Portions of the bike trail will be temporarily detoured. A temporary bike trail will be open for all of construction. The section of trail through Four Mile Run park in front of Big Jim's will be closed. All of the pedestrian and bicycle traffic there will be routed on the street and sidewalk separately as a detour. We will be keeping the connection open to the Eliza Furnace trail. We have been working with Bike Pittsburgh and Friends of the Riverfront to ensure notices are in place. The Mon Oakland Connector is a separate discussion with the Mon Oakland Connector folks.
- Question: You just said the Mon Oakland is a separate discussion, but I'm sure everyone is aware that folks in the Run neighborhood wrote letters to the PA DEP to ask that the road through the park

not be connected to the desperately needed stormwater project. My understanding is that the permit is now in the technical review phase. Has there been any indication from the PA DEP that the road could be separated out for permitting? If no, who is the person who makes the final call about those two projects having to be connected and not permitted and presented publicly to stand on their own merits?

- Answer: Economies of scale mean that when projects are planned in the same area, regarding utility conflicts and digging up the ground, it makes sense monetarily to do the planning and permitting at the same time. If anything happens that we cannot get the permitting for both, PWSA has said that we will move forward with stormwater project. The idea is to try to save the ratepayers and taxpayers as much money as possible. The PA DEP just started their technical review, and I do not think we have gotten any indication about which way they are going to go.
- Question: Has PWSA been instructed to not interfere with the Mon Oakland connection?
  - Answer: The priority for PWSA is the stormwater project. However, as an entity with ratepayer funding, PWSA has to use ratepayer money responsibly. We are not saying we have to do the stormwater project with the Mon Oakland Connector, but as long as it is possible with the timeline and permitting coincides, we have a responsibility to the ratepayers to coordinate in order to reduce overall costs.
- Question: The Mon Oakland Connector is a foundation project as best as I can tell. I want to be sure that PWSA gets to do this project and is not impeded by the Mon Oakland Connect.
  - Answer: PWSA's priority is the stormwater project. We also have a responsibility to spend ratepayer money and taxpayer money responsibly.
- Question: A reduction in impact for 10-year floods was mentioned I believe in regards to the culvert to the river. Considering the Run has had 15 and 75-year floods in the past 10 years, that's not sufficient to make an impact. Are all the other projects limited to "somewhat" addressing 10-year floods or are serious measures being taken to handle real flooding?
  - Answer: There are other sections of the city where stormwater flooding impacts neighborhoods. PWSA has committed to a level of service for flooding that PWSA can provide across the city, not just for one neighborhood. We are planning for a 10-year flood reduction. Our level of service for Four Mile Run is constrained by the level of service needs in other parts of our system across the city. PWSA is undertaking a study to determine what level of service PWSA and its ratepayers can afford. Typically, cities can only provide a 5 or 10-year flood level of service. Floods are expected to increase in the future, so we are working to make our stormwater projects more flexible for the future. Until the evaluations are complete, we cannot say what the level of service for the city will be.
- Question: Will this recording will be promptly posted to the project page on pgh2o.com?
  - Answer: Yes, we will post the presentation recording tomorrow.
- Question: Will there be access between the Four Mile Run trail and Schenley Park across railroad tracks?

- Answer: There are two areas where the stormwater project is crossing the railroad tracks. First is Boundary Street coming into Schenley Park at the soccer field. That is a tight corridor where we will be installing a stormwater pipe, so there will be a very short closure there during construction to get the pipe installed under the road. If you are referring to the manmade trail up by the lake where people cross the railroad tracks, that crossing is illegal and unsafe. At this time, we don't have any plans of building a trail across there. The City has future plans to address that crossing access with a tunnel.
- Question: We need to get back to the discussion about taking the Mon Oakland Connector off the Joint Permit Application. You say you are neutral, but it seems like you aren't considering the possibility that the connector doesn't go through. Can you assure us that none of what you are doing in this project is to aid the development of the proposed Mon Connector?
  - Answer from Tony: PWSA would do the stormwater project if the Mon Oakland Connector wasn't there. Neutral isn't the word I would use. Because we are agency responsible to the city residents, if there is any project in the area where PWSA is doing a project, PWSA has a responsibility to work with that project. If a public agency did not include a project that was happening at the same time in the same place, that would be an irresponsible use of funds.
  - Answer from Mallory: If the City were to do the Mon Oakland Connector without the PWSA project, it would not require a Joint Permit Application. It could move forward on its own.
  - Answer from Tim Nuttle, Civil & Environmental Consultants (CEC): The permit that the PA DEP and the Army Corps of Engineers is evaluating is for impacts to waterways. The Mon Oakland Connector would have no lake or stream or wetland impacts on its own. The two projects come together because they are happening in the same place. If we tried to submit the permit without the Mon Oakland Connector, PWSA would be considered negligent. The responsibility of the PA DEP and the Army Corps of Engineers is to protect the water resources and ensure that all local, state, federal regulations are being followed.
- Question: Is there any concern about increased development in Hazelwood creating increased overflow risk for the new pipe? And, if so, are there any particular areas that need to be focused on in Hazelwood to plant trees to absorb water?
  - Answer: If you are referring to the Hazelwood Green development, that project does not drain to the M-29 sewershed.
  - Question: No, we have other developments that are going on above Second Ave and on Second Ave. We have grants to get trees, and I'm wondering where to place those trees. There is a lot of water in the Greenway, and if new areas by the Greenway were developed, would that impact the overflow.
    - Answer: With any new development, PWSA has reviews and regulations regarding stormwater and sewer tie-ins. I think the area that you are talking about is also not part of the M-29 sewershed. But a general recommendation is to plant trees and try to get your stormwater to a better location.
- Comment: It should also be recognized that reductions in flooding during a 10-year event also reduce flooding at all other levels e.g. 25, 50, 25, etc. The presentation presented numbers for the 10-year but there are also reductions at the other levels.

- Comment: Providing a trail connection to cross to Panther Hollow Lake is part of the Department of Mobility and Infrastructure (DOMI) plan for the Mon Oakland Connector.
- Question: As a Greenfield resident, my stormwater drains to the Run neighborhood. I want to thank PWSA for the project you are doing. It is inspiring that PWSA is doing some much work in the Run, but the solutions must come upstream in the watershed. How do neighborhoods advance the opportunity for watershed headwater solutions?
  - Answer: One of the things we are asking residents to do is to report stormwater related issue to us by calling our 24/7 Dispatch line, so that we can record where these problems areas to investigate and inform future stormwater work. In addition, PWSA just brought on a stormwater strategic planning team. That master plan project will help us plan system wide for stormwater management, considering quality of life. That project will kick off in the next 6 weeks and we would love input from residents and watershed managers.
- Question: What I want the people at PWSA and anyone who is listening to understand, is that we have concerns about this project. We need the flooding to be addressed and we are happy that PWSA is proposing to do that. Either way, this project will be highly disruptive to our neighborhood. We have had to file Right to Know documents to get PWSA to talk. The staging is going to happen in the one green space in our neighborhood, Schenley Park is going to be torn up, and the only road in and out of our neighborhood is going to be torn up. This project was initially sold as a solution to flooding, rather than reduction to flooding. We found out through Right to Know requests that PWSA was saying internally that there may be a need to discuss property acquisitions. What properties are you considering acquiring?
  - Answer from Tony: I do not know of any properties that PWSA is planning to acquire as part of this project.
  - Answer from Mallory: We are planning easements for access and maintenance of the water main. That is for PWSA to maintain the critical drinking water system. We are planning to use the green space for staging and major construction. We are going to be digging it up and putting very large pipes in the ground at those locations. I feel for the residents in that we are digging up some of the greenway, but there is nowhere else for the pipes to go. At this time, there are no permanent acquisitions planned. Those locations are owned by City Parks right now, and they will stay that way.
- Question: Right to know requests showed lots of discussion about property acquisition for flood management. What eminent domain rights does PWSA have? Want to emphasize that the Run residents will not be giving up their property. It only makes sense that PWSA and CEC identify in the beginning where does the water go and flood. Can we see the property by property analysis report, and when can we see it? People are not satisfied with the plan because it doesn't do enough given the severity and frequency of flooding, and the climate and development pressures. Where is the recourse if what PWSA is doing doesn't work?
  - Answer: There is no such report that looked at the area property by property. The report that was developed looked at stormwater flooding from different storm events that were monitored and we are aware happened in The Run. The project looked at offloading as

much stormwater as possible from the combined sewer system to separate pipes directly to the river. When you remove stormwater from the combined sewer system, you add more capacity in the existing combined sewers to carry more stormwater flow. I think the Right to Know request included the hydraulic analysis report for the stormwater for the whole system. It is very difficult to provide in any system more than a 5 or 10-year storm level of control. Most cities in this country end up providing that 5 to 10-year level. If you could provide a 75-year level of service for The Run, you would have to provide that for all the other systems in the city. One of the evaluations we are planning is to get an idea of what the costs would be for a city of this size at different levels of service. PWSA needs to analyze what the ratepayers can afford, and then what PWSA could provide within those confines. I have yet to hear of a 75-year level of service provided by a city.

- Comment: Nine Mile Run Watershed Association provides a number of household stormwater management approaches. Information available at the Stormworks website: [stormworkspgh.com](http://stormworkspgh.com)
- Comment from resident: Like people living on ocean shores where climate change is raising sea level, some places may have to recognize that it is untenable to live there.
  - Response from resident: I do not consider it similar. The Run residents have been living here before the highway was built overhead and development. These homes are not second homes along a beach.
  - Question: Is PWSA still in discussion with PennDOT about stormwater runoff from the highway?
    - Answer: That is still under discussion.
- Question: Is the dam work permit application approved and if so, is work going to commence this fall? Concerned about timing viz. migratory birds that use the pond - late fall would be the best time to take the trees down.
  - Answer: The dam work permit application is still in review. Our goal is to get all the permits approved and start construction this fall. The work at the lake is towards the tail end of the project construction because a stormwater system is built from downstream to upstream. There will be some tree removals started in Junction Hollow first for the water main relocation. Once that water main is in the ground, the stormwater project construction will be removing additional trees. We do not have the exact dates for tree removals yet, but there are certainly things we need to take into account with birds, bat trees, and habitat.
- Mallory commented: At the end of the day, we will be putting back the grass and trails in the parks and planting more trees than we take out. A lot of disruption will take place over the next few years, but the end result will be green again.
- Tony commented: PWSA is trying to provide stormwater control service as effectively and affordably as we are able to. As we move forward, we encourage people who are interested to be part of the city-wide Stormwater Master Plan process.