Four Mile Run Stormwater Improvement Project
Virtual Community Meeting Minutes
6:30 – 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 18, 2020

Rebecca Zito, Acting Senior Manager of Public Affairs at the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) welcomed meeting participants and explained the purpose of the meeting.

Participants included local residents, project stakeholders, representatives from universities, people interested in learning more about stormwater, and representatives from the City of Pittsburgh Department of Mobility and Infrastructure (DOMI) and the Allegheny County Sanitary Authority (ALCOSAN).

Alex Sciulli, Chief of Program Management at PWSA began the presentation by explaining PWSA's mission and the goals of this stormwater project.

Tim Nuttle, Ecosystem Restoration Ecologist at Civil and Environmental Consultants (CEC) presented an update about the Four Mile Run Early Action Projects. PWSA completed construction of drainage channels with underground storage pipes along Overlook Drive and the Bridle Trail in Schenley Park in May 2020.

Kari Mackenbach, Environmental Business Development at ms consultants, presented an update about the enhanced modeling that was recently completed for the Four Mile Run watershed. The new model builds on previous modeling efforts to include surface drainage systems in addition to pipe systems, which has improved the modeling accuracy for flooding.

Tim Nuttle provided an update on the overall Four Mile Run project design. The designs for Panther Hollow Lake improvements and the new Junction Hollow stream have not changed significantly since the last community meeting in December 2019.

Mallory Griffin, Water / Wastewater Section Head at Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson (JMT), explained that a pipe is needed to transport the stormwater from the new Junction Hollow stream to the river. The most cost-effective solution is a deep, gravity storm sewer pipe because of the many utility conflicts closer to the surface.

Alex Sciulli provided an overview of the project schedule. He explained that PWSA is submitting project permits in June 2020, and construction is expected to begin in spring 2021, depending on how long it takes to receive approval for those permits. PWSA has committed full funding for the project.

The presentation and the following question and answer session were recorded and are available at www.pgh2o.com/4mr.

Comments in red below are status updates since the June 18, 2020 meeting.

Discussion:

- Question: Who should we contact on the state review board to explain our concern that there has been no model provided that does not include the Mon-Oakland Connector (MOC) road for shuttles between Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and Hazelwood Green? We have expert engineers who have concluded that this large paved road will inhibit storm water reduction and reduce the success of this project. We want to ensure that the inclusion of this road is taken into consideration during the state review of the current plan. We would like to see a plan alternative that does not include this road so that the state can compare project success with and without the road.

    - Answer: The joint permit application that we are submitting includes all the work planned by DOMI, including the area of disturbance and stormwater runoff. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) will have a complete picture of everything planned for this area and will look at the stormwater runoff. The local DEP office in Pittsburgh will be reviewing the permit, and we can provide their names and contact information after this meeting. The joint permit application process requires a public notice and any residents can comment.
    - Update: The joint permit application review representatives include Joe Snyder, Jim Sommers, Dana Drake, and Paul Eiswerth from the DEP and Mike Engelhardt from the US Army Corps of Engineers. The DEP Southwest Regional Office phone number is 412-442-4000. The US Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District phone number is 412-395-7100.

- Question: Proper species of stormwater-absorbing trees are often under-planted and not well maintained during early years as they take root. Can you show how the project will look in the first couple of years and provide detailed information of tree loss and replacement that offsets loss of mature trees?

    - Answer: We don't have a graphic of what the project will look like in the early years, but the planting plan is a perennial grass and wildflower mix in different zones of height that will provide permanent cover during the early years of establishment. You are essentially going to see a wildflower meadow that will have shorter plants near the Three Rivers Heritage Trail and taller plants near the railroad, which will help shield the railroad from the visitors. Intermixed among that will be several hundred trees per acre. The site is about four acres, so several hundred trees will be planted. They are going to be a mixture of smaller, whip-size saplings and ball and burlap trees that will be a couple inches in diameter. Those will be comprised of species selected from the silver maple and sycamore floodplain community, such as sycamores, silver maples, magnolias, flowering dogwoods, redbuds, basswoods, birches, and a number of other species. Unlike street trees, they are going to be planted to reforest a naturally functioning ecosystem. They will be overplanted in density for what is going to live in the long term, because that is how natural forests grow. Over time, trees grow, take up additional space, and then some of the trees that are not in such good condition or didn't grow quite as fast die. That's why a natural forest will have maybe 100 trees per acre, but we are planting several hundred trees per acre. Regarding tree loss, we are coordinating

with the City of Pittsburgh and accounting for all the trees that will need to be cut down to accommodate the project. Most of the trees by the railroad will remain. The main impacts will be trees on the west side of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail, towards the northern part of the valley as you approach the lake. Most of the trees that will have to be removed are native black locust and invasive tree of heaven, and those will be replaced with native species. The project will replace each mature tree with many more small trees to satisfy the City of Pittsburgh's requirements regarding tree canopy loss.

- Question: Is there any opportunity for the city to provide incentives to private property owners on the west side of Junction Hollow to eradicate invasive species and to plant trees and shrubs that will better secure the hillside (and contribute to a more sustainable microbiome in the Hollow)?

    - Answer: The City of Pittsburgh does have a tree canopy ordinance that regulates canopy trees. In the broader context outside this particular project, even invasive trees can have shade benefits, but can still be troublesome. This is outside the realm of PWSA's stormwater project, but the Department of City Planning, City of Pittsburgh Forestry Division within the City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Works (DPW), and the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy (PPC) are actively involved in these types of questions.

- Comment: The west wall of the hollow is mostly privately owned. Right, this is not a PWSA question. It's about collaboration with the Department of City Planning. The biggest problem with invasive species on the hillside is the vines, not weed trees. Vines kill all trees. DPW and PPC maintain the hillsides on the park side. No such maintenance on the other side of the hollow.

    - Answer: This sounds like the type of subject that would be considered in the updates to City ordinances and the creation of a unified City Stormwater Management Code that is currently going on. The Department of City Planning and PWSA are leading this process, which just started. We can share the process webpage on the City's website with more information. These updates aim to help developers and private property owners better manage stormwater, and incentives may be a part of that.
    - Update: Learn more at https://pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/stormwater-code-update.

- Question: Can PWSA and the City provide a holistic drawing of proposed changes to trails and paved corridors? Compartmentalization makes it hard for stakeholders to understand how the physical changes will look.

    - Answer: Yes, we can create and share such a drawing.
      Update: We are working on creating this drawing.

- Question: Does this design mean that all of the existing combined sewers will now be, in effect, exclusively sanitary sewers?

    - Answer: No. Unfortunately, the large combined sewer trunk lines are fed from Oakland, Squirrel Hill, and Greenfield. The pipes already have sanitary flow in them before they reach Four Mile Run. We will not be taking that sanitary flow out because there is no easy, cost-effective way to do that sewer separation. The new pipe in Four Mile Run will

be for stormwater only. The piped stormwater will not enter the combined sewer, which will help alleviate the flooding problem in the existing combined sewer.

- Question for Karina Ricks, Director of DOMI: How does the construction schedule fit in with the replacement of Swinburne Bridge, and would any piece of this complicate any plan to re-connect Swinburne with Swinburne Extension?

    - Answer: Since Karina Ricks had left the call, PWSA will forward this question to Director Ricks and others at DOMI familiar with the project, then share their answer.
    - Update: The question was forwarded to Director Ricks and DOMI on Monday, June 22.

- Question: What stage is this project in with regard to permitting with the railroad?

    - Answer: We are currently revising our railroad permit applications and plan to submit them later this month. They include the bridges at Second Avenue and at Boundary Street and the pipe crossing and spillway at Junction Hollow and Panther Hollow Lake.

- Question: To be clear, did you say that the path between Junction Hollow and Panther Hollow Lake would be removed and not immediately replaced in this project? If so, what is the timeline to reconnect the two areas?

    - Answer: Currently, there is no official path between Junction Hollow and Panther Hollow Lake. There is a path, but it is illegal and unsafe. It has been fenced by the railroad and then people have removed it many times. The project is not removing any path such as it exists, but the City of Pittsburgh is investigating the different options for providing a safe and legal path, whether that is an at-grade crossing or a pedestrian underpass is still to be determined. They are in the early stages of investigating.

- Question: Can you address what any closures or detours of the Junction Hollow Trail will look like? Will it even need to be closed if the work is trenchless?

    - Answer: It's complicated. We will be putting a lot of big pipe into the ground, which requires some parts of the trail to be relocated for safety reasons. Minor shutdowns will have to occur, which we are going to try to plan at off-peak hours, perhaps weekdays when the trail is not in use so that it can be open for recreation on weekends. We are currently starting that coordination with City Parks so that the trail can be used most of the time. Overall, our plan is to keep the trail open to the extent possible, but safety is the highest priority. Construction will include installing the pipeline in the bike lane all the way up Saline Street, so for that portion of the construction, the bike traffic will need to merge with vehicular traffic. We will have to close the trail when we cross under the railroad bridge at Boundary Street, which is currently the only way the trail exits Schenley Park into the Four Mile Run neighborhood. Other than that, we will try to reroute bike traffic and pedestrian traffic throughout construction.

- Comment: Commuters use the bike trail to get to work. Closing the trail during the workday would be a problem for commuters since it is not just a recreational trail.

    - Answer: Unfortunately, since this is such a large project and we will be repaving the trail, there will be times when it is a temporary gravel trail during construction. We will be able to provide more information about construction impacts during future community meetings. We are planning to hold another meeting later this year around December, as well as a meeting before construction begins in early 2021.

- Question: With such a complex project, it seems not unlikely that costs could extend beyond estimates. If costs extend beyond the level at which the project is funded by PWSA, where will the funding come from?

    - Answer: We anticipate, like any project, that there is always a possibility that costs will escalate. However, PWSA is committed to the project. This is a very important project for the region, for PWSA, for our stormwater management program, so the funding will come from PWSA.