



CITY OF URBANA, ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
ENGINEERING DIVISION

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Laurel L. Prussing and Members of the City Council
FROM: William R. Gray, Public Works Director
Gale L. Jamison, Assistant City Engineer
Bradley M. Bennett, Civil Engineer
DATE: August 20, 2009
RE: Private Sanitary Sewer Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this memo is to review the City's policy on private sanitary sewers. The memo will also examine potential alternatives to the City's existing policy on private sanitary sewers in an attempt to ease the financial burden for property owners that want the City to assume ownership of their private sanitary sewers that serve two or more properties.

Recommended Action

The Public Works Department requests guidance from the City Council on whether to modify the existing City policy on private sanitary sewers. Guidance received from the City Council will provide staff the necessary information to draft an ordinance if a change in policy is recommended.

Background and Facts

In some of the older neighborhoods of Urbana there are private properties served by private (in contrast to public) sanitary sewers. A private sanitary sewer is a sewer pipe that serves more than one property before connecting to the City's or the Urbana Champaign Sanitary District's public sanitary sewer system. Generally this situation occurs when a public sanitary sewer does not exist immediately adjacent to the properties. In contrast a sanitary sewer lateral is a sewer pipe that serves only one property before connecting to the public sewer system. City plumbing code no longer allows private sanitary sewers serving multiple properties and requires each property to have its own service lateral connecting directly to a public sanitary sewer.

Additionally it is difficult for property owners to maintain private sanitary sewers. Private sanitary sewers often run longer distances than sanitary sewer service laterals making them difficult to clean or locate defects for repairs. It is also difficult to get all the property owners served by the sewer to participate in the costs of cleaning or repairing the pipe. If a property owner won't voluntarily participate in the cost of a cleaning or repairing a private sanitary sewer, the other property owners have

to take legal action against the property owner refusing to participate. Typically, property owners do not want to take legal action against their neighbors so one property owner is burdened with the entire cost of the cleaning or repair.

The Engineering Division identified 204 lots in Urbana that are served by private sanitary sewers which are highlighted on the attached map. To address these 204 lots, it is estimated there would need to be about 60-80 private sewer conversions.

The City's current policy on private sanitary sewers is that the operation, maintenance, and repair of those sewers are the responsibility of property owners served by the private sewer. The City will take over ownership of the private sanitary sewer if requested by property owners served by the sewer and if the following conditions are met:

- Minimum pipe diameter size is 6-inches.
- Sewer is televised and determined to be in satisfactory condition by the Public Works Director or his/her designee. If not in satisfactory condition the sewer must be improved to City standards.
- Property owners must provide an easement for sewer if it is not located in public right-of-way or an existing easement.
- Manholes must be installed at the ends of the line or any change in pipe direction or diameter to facilitate maintenance by the City of Urbana.

These requirements are designed to assure the sewer meets the City standards for public sewers, that the sewer can be cleaned and televised using the City's equipment, and that the City does not have to invest funds in upgrading or repairing the sewer after it assumes ownership of it.

These requirements can place a financial burden on property owners that want the City to assume ownership of their private sanitary sewer. A manhole or sewer repair can cost from \$2,500 to \$5,000 depending on whether it is located under street pavement or in a non-paved area. Installing two manholes on a private sanitary sewer line could cost property owners from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

A permit from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency would only be required if the City replaced the existing private sanitary sewer line.

Alternatives

1. City Subsidized Private to Public Sanitary Sewer Program

City would assume ownership of a private sanitary sewer after the City completed the necessary infrastructure upgrades on the sewer. Private sanitary sewers eligible for conversion to a public sanitary sewer would have to serve two or more properties and be prioritized based on the following criteria:

- a. Private sanitary sewers experiencing back-up problems

- b. Private sanitary sewers where street resurfacing or reconstruction projects are planned
- c. Private sanitary sewers located in public right-of-way

Property owners would be responsible for providing the City an easement before a private sanitary sewer would be eligible for conversion to a public sanitary sewer. All property owners would have to provide easements before the City would assume ownership of a private sanitary sewer.

Infrastructure upgrades to the private sanitary sewers would be funded out of a portion of the sanitary sewer repair and rehabilitation funds specifically set aside for private sanitary sewers. The property owners would not be responsible for any costs for upgrading their private sanitary sewer lateral to a public sewer. These funds would be generated by the Sewer Benefit Tax.

2. No Change from Existing Policy

No modifications to current City policy on private sanitary sewers. Property owners are responsible for maintaining private sanitary sewers and must follow the current policy in order to have the City take ownership of their private sanitary sewer.

The City in 1988, adopted Section 21-57 (o) of the City Code that required a separate sanitary sewer service connection for every lot in a development. So the scenario as described in this memorandum should not be perpetuated within the corporate limits but may be encountered with some future annexed properties.

Fiscal Impact

If alternative 1 is selected, the Public Works Department recommends setting aside \$25,000 of the sanitary sewer repair and rehabilitation budget on an annual basis to fund the conversion of private sanitary sewers to public sewers. Assuming an average estimated cost of \$12,500 in infrastructure upgrades to a private sanitary sewer this would enable the City to assume ownership of two private sanitary sewers a year. Once funds for the private to public sanitary conversion program were exhausted no additional conversion projects would be initiated.

LOTS SERVED BY PRIVATE SANITARY SEWER

SHEET 1 OF 2



LOTS SERVED BY PRIVATE SANITARY SEWER

SHEET 2 OF 2

