



**CITY OF URBANA, ILLINOIS
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

ENGINEERING DIVISION

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Mayor Diane Wolfe Marlin and Members of the City Council
FROM: William R. Gray, Public Works Director
Bradley M. Bennett, Assistant City Engineer
Justin Swinford, Civil Engineer II
DATE: May 24, 2018
RE: Overhead Sewer Program Proposed Changes

Background

In 1998, the Joint Intergovernmental Sanitary Sewer Technical Committee, consisting of representatives from the City of Urbana, the City of Champaign, the Village of Savoy, and the Urbana & Champaign Sanitary District (UCSD), proposed a program to assist homeowners with the cost of installing overhead sewer systems to address chronic sanitary sewer back-ups into homes.

An overhead sewer system consists of a sanitary sewer ejector pump, collection pit, and check valve, and the installation of these systems typically involves reconfiguring the lower level plumbing in a home. These installations can be expensive (typically \$6,000 - \$8,000), but are necessary in older homes to prevent sanitary sewer water from backing up through basement plumbing fixtures during heavy rainfall events.

The original program provided a 75% cost-share to property owners, up to a maximum reimbursement of \$3,700. The City and UCSD participated in the reimbursement costs, with the City covering two-thirds of the expense (\$2,500) and UCSD paying the remaining third (\$1,200). Any costs above the maximum reimbursement amount are paid for by the property owner. This program was approved by the City Council in November of 1998 and the first reimbursements were issued in early 1999.

In 2013, the program reimbursement maximum was increased to \$4,500, with \$3,000 paid by the City and \$1,500 paid by UCSD. This increase reflected the rising cost of overhead sewer installations. In the 18 year history of this program, \$169,289.25 has been reimbursed to 49 property owners for the installation of overhead sewer systems. That amounts to \$112,859.50 paid by the City to residents, with the balance provided by UCSD. These installations have helped to prevent damage to homes and personal property during heavy rainfall events.

City Staff presented at the February 26, 2018 Committee of the Whole Meeting, proposing an ordinance to include the Overhead Sewer Program in the City Code. Since that time, the Legal Division has determined that an ordinance for this program would be unnecessary and that the program does not need to be included in the City Code. A line item is included in the budget and is reflected in the Capital Improvement Plan for each fiscal year, which is sufficient for establishing this program.

Proposed Program Updates

The Public Works Department is proposing two changes to the existing program that will be beneficial to property owners and residents:

1. Decrease the minimum number of required quotes for installation costs from three to two. This will allow property owners to provide the required number of quotes more quickly, as finding three contractors to provide this information often proves time consuming.
2. Increase the maximum reimbursement for the program to \$5,250. This is based on a 50% reimbursement (max of \$3,500) by the City and 25% reimbursement (max of \$1,750) by UCSD. The proposed increased reimbursement amount would reimburse 75% of up to \$7,000 in overhead sewer installation costs.

These proposed changes provide updates to the program that are consistent with the program offered by the City of Champaign for its residents.

Financial Impacts to the City Budget

The proposed increase for the maximum reimbursement would result in a higher expense to the City. Each installation would potentially cost the City \$500.00 more than it would under the existing program. The City has averaged three reimbursements per year over the last 5 years, with an average yearly cost to the City of \$8,343. This could increase to approximately \$10,500 on average. As the City budgets \$13,500 annually for this program, a budget increase is not proposed at this time.

Recommended Action

No City Council action is required. The Engineering Division will update the program materials and the proposed changes will be implemented immediately.