

December 4, 2013

Dear Neighbor:

We want to thank everyone who attended the October 30 public meeting regarding the City of Columbus watershed protection program. As we indicated at the meeting, we are interested in strengthening partnerships with our neighbors and we believe the meeting was a positive first step.

For those of you that couldn't attend, we wanted to summarize the meeting, as well as provide answers to the numerous questions we received. While some issues are still being worked on and others may not be able to be addressed in the manner requested, we felt it was important to follow up with answers and provide information on next steps in this process. If you missed the meeting, the presentation is available on the Department of Public Utilities' web site, Watershed Management area, at www.watershed.columbus.gov.

At the meeting, the city agreed to move forward on three new strategies:

- 1) Formulating a pilot project which involves using public funds to remove invasive species, such as honeysuckle, from city-owned property.
- 2) Allowing for the construction of a path through the city property to access the waterfront, whether a homeowner has a dock permit or not. (Boats will still require a dock or stake).
- 3) More flexibility on stair access where possible.

Staff is currently working on all three of these issues and we will report back to our neighbors once the final policies are completed.

In addition to the changes described above, the city is hiring a consultant to review our overall watershed protection management program. While the land stewardship program is a small aspect of this work, we have asked for a review of our policies and committed to including neighbors and public input into the process. We expect to have a draft report of the work in late 2014/early 2015.

Finally, we committed to improving communications with neighbors and agreed to send out regular updates, strengthen our web site and potentially form an advisory group comprised of all affected stakeholders. We have discussed having the advisory group meet on a quarterly basis and provide summaries of the meetings through our ongoing communications efforts.

Attached is a more detailed summary and responses of the recent meeting. Obviously all of these issues will not be solved overnight, but we look forward to working with each of you to ensure we are meeting our goals of protecting the city's drinking water supply while also serving as good neighbors.

Thank you and we look forward to working with all of you in the future.

Sincerely,



Greg J. Davies, Director



Alan D. McKnight, Director
Recreation and Parks Department



Public Comment Responsiveness Summary
City of Columbus Reservoirs/Land Stewardship Public Meeting
October 30, 2013

Stormwater related questions and comments:

- *A question was asked about unfiltered water draining elsewhere, for example Upper Arlington into Griggs Reservoir.* More stormwater regulations from Ohio EPA are expected, but some issues will remain outside our control; for example, Columbus does not have jurisdiction in Upper Arlington. The city is focused on what flows into the reservoirs and what it can control. Various water filtering infrastructure was installed in parkland around the Griggs, O'Shaughnessy and Hoover reservoirs including rain gardens, pervious pavement and bio-swales.
- *A suggestion was made to limit lawn chemicals on private properties around the reservoirs.* Most of those lawns are outside the City of Columbus jurisdiction, so that isn't possible. Secondly, surface water runoff travelling across lawns carries pollutants picked up along the way from other yards and streets.
- *A concern about septic systems was raised.* The city is concerned about all water quality impacts around our reservoirs, but this is an issue for which the county health departments have jurisdiction. Please direct those concerns to the appropriate health and public works/sewer departments.
- *Question was posed on why they could not have roof gutters draining across city property directly into the reservoir.* Before you do anything on city-owned land, please contact the city to avoid unintended consequences. The preference for rainwater is to send it across the vegetation, where nature can filter pollutants, which also helps prevent land erosion.
- *Erosion issues around the reservoirs were raised.* Erosion control is a goal of the land stewardship program, and the Department of Public Utilities has undertaken erosion protection measures to stabilize some areas. If you see an erosion problem, please notify the Watershed Management Office at 645-1721 or email watershed@columbus.gov.

The following items and policies were raised, which are being reviewed and considered:

- *Some speakers said they would like permission to remove invasive species, poison ivy and dead trees on the adjacent city-owned land stewardship areas. A master gardener offered her services on identifying the plants with neighbors and others volunteered their services.* The city is pursuing a pilot program with a contractor. While some might abide by removing only what is permitted, others may not, and there is a concern that beneficial plants could be accidentally or intentionally removed, so there are some challenges, but we will look at it.
- *Would you consider rain garden solutions for the land stewardship areas?* The Division of Water will be looking at a variety of new technologies and best management practices as part of the upcoming watershed master plan update. The city is using rain gardens in other locations, and we are in discussions with Shawnee Hills on installing more.
- *High grass, noxious weeds and mowing ordinances were brought up.* The city will abide by all applicable laws, and this issue will be looked at further.
- *Suggestion was made to allow some limb removal to help open up views, and another suggested if they could remove brush and weeds, the roots would still be there, absorbing water.* These kinds of issues will be reviewed. Removal of invasive honeysuckle and poison ivy will help with views as well.
- *Question was asked what happened to the Waterways Task Force.* The Waterways Task Force was a group of reservoir stakeholders and agencies, which was disbanded after the watershed management plans were developed and implemented many years ago. The Waterways Advisory Council discussed and advised on prospective rule changes and other issues affecting the reservoirs. The city will look into resurrecting a new advisory committee.
- *Realtors struggle with the boat dock transferring questions with prospective buyers and it would help if we knew.* The information on LSAs and boat dock permits are on the Public Utilities and Recreation and Parks Web sites. The stewardship agreements don't automatically transfer to a new owner because we don't know if the new owner will agree to it, and it is required for the dock permit; however, we will look into possible policy solutions.
- *Concerns were brought up on dock rules, grandfathering, footage requirements, why the fees are higher than in other areas, and why it costs more to have a dock behind your house than in a marina.* Some changes would require a city code change and cannot be done administratively, and there are blanket rules on docks from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers the city can't control. The fees are based on the costs to staff and administer the programs, and

for the exclusive use of city property by the adjacent property owners. We can't speak for funding sources other cities may have. Recreation and Parks will review the points raised.

Plants and land stewardship program:

- *I signed a land stewardship agreement and it was rejected but it was not explained to me what I need to do.* Please call the Watershed Management office at 645-1721 and if it is not explained satisfactorily to you, please contact dpucommunications@columbus.gov or call 645-6141.
- *It was asked if the plant list on the Web site (www.watershed.columbus.gov) was still correct.* The lists are correct. The city's Web site is currently undergoing review for updates. Longer range, plant species will be part of the watershed master plan review mentioned at the meeting.
- *Some questioned the science behind the land stewardship program, and one asked why mice and ticks were needed for water quality.* They aren't, but the point is that land vegetation is needed to filter the water, which can create wildlife habitat. If you are having a major problem with ticks or mosquitoes, please contact your local health department.
- *Why is there a non-native plant (Cosmos) in a parkland area?* This was a temporary annual plant used to quickly fill bare spots until native perennials could establish and fill in this area.

Communication:

- *Several attendees thanked the city for hosting the meeting and said better communication like this was needed.* The city agrees and we plan to improve communication going forward.
- *Comments were made that the two departments (Public Utilities and Recreation and Parks) need to communicate better; for example, "it seems the left hand doesn't always know what the right hand is doing."* This has been noted and efforts will be made toward that end on better interdepartmental staff communication.

Miscellaneous:

- *Question was asked why there are sometimes fluctuations in water levels, with Griggs being sometimes too high, Hoover sometimes too low.* The reservoir water elevations are directly related to both rainfall received and demand from the downstream water treatment plants. Hoover is often low in the fall due to higher summer consumption at the Hap Cremean Water Treatment Plant on Morse Road, which serves over a half million customers and is the city's largest plant. Size differences in watersheds also affect the levels.
- *There is trash at the Hoover Sailing Club and it needs to be cleaned up.* The city leases land to this private club but Recreation and Parks will investigate this, as well as other leased city property, to bring into compliance.
- *What would have happened if the provision in Ohio House Bill 59 had not been vetoed?* The city believes any legislation proposed removing our property rights will require action in order to protect drinking water quality for our 1.1 million water customers.
- *Comment was made that a picture in the presentation of a ramp going into the water is at a city-owned property, Leatherlips.* This was found to be not true. The ramp in the photo was adjacent to private property on Griggs and was removed two years ago, and the picture was being used as an example of unauthorized structures built over the years on city property.
- *An attendee asked why they were being spied on with a helicopter by the city.* Answer is you aren't; neither Public Utilities nor the Recreation and Parks Department own a plane or helicopter. In the case of Hoover, the City of Westerville has a speed patrol program via the air and signs are posted along Sunbury Road to this effect. Other aircraft seen may be privately owned.

For further questions, please visit watershed.columbus.gov, parks.columbus.gov, call 645-6141, email dpucommunications@columbus.gov and please join us on Facebook and Twitter.