



Creeks, Drainage & Wastewater Advisory Committee (CDWAC)

June 19, 2019 Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue

Room 4901

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

CDWAC Members	Present?	SPU Staff & Guests	Role
Colum Lang	Y	Natasha Walker	CAC Program Coordinator
Gary Olson	Y	Sheryl Shapiro	CAC Program Manager
Maria McDaniel	Y	Rachel Garrett	Wastewater Education and Outreach Program Manager
Thy Pham	Y	Malcolm Wylie	Environmental Compliance Inspector, Wastewater Source Control, Drainage and Wastewater LOB
Andrew Schiffer	Y	Gary Christensen	Wastewater Source Control Supervisor, Drainage and Wastewater
Isabel Carrera Zamanillo	Y	Rose Ann Lopez	System Management Division Director, Drainage and Wastewater LOB
		Karen Izumoto	Intern, Drainage and Wastewater Outreach and Education
		Guests	
		Weng-Ching Cheung	Guest
		Jason Devaney	Guest
		Dane Madsen	Guest
		Amal Saleh	Guest

1. Regular Business

- CDWAC member, Maria McDaniel, opened the meeting at 5:34 PM.
- Sheryl Shapiro indicated emergency exits and exit procedures.
- May CDWAC Meeting Summary will be approved electronically.

2. CAC Program Updates

Drainage and Wastewater LOB Updates:

- SIFF Film Festival showed “Engineering with Nature”, a film about restoration work in Thornton Creek on June 8, 2019 at the downtown Seattle Public Library. Staff added that SPU General Manager/CEO Mami Hara, said it was great to hear community saying “community-centered.”
- The “Influence of the Confluence” event at Meadowbrook Pond took place on June 9. Staff said it was very well attended.
- The Ship Canal Water Quality Project (SCWQP), a \$570 million-dollar program to address combined sewer overflows, has received contractor bids and is going through evaluation of the

tunnel portion of the contract. CDWAC will have a deeper update on that project later in the year.

- SPU is beginning to dredge a stormwater pond in Lake City to restore functionality.
- Drainage and Wastewater Planning efforts. CDWAC is due for a presentation, perhaps in fall. The project team has just awarded the contract for the Vision Plan, which will involve deep community engagement, including new and fresh ways to engage with communities through art.
- SPU's RainWise Program hosted a new kind of event to connect WMBE contractors with the work we're doing, to build capacity with WMBE contractors and build a more level playing field in the green stormwater infrastructure field.
- There are numerous department-wide initiatives underway:
 - Risk & Resiliency Framework. This work was initially covered in an All-CAC meeting. The first round of the plan for that will be submitted to City Council this month. We will share this with CAC members when available.
 - Affordability & Accountability. A draft report is available, and we hope to have a CAC meeting on that soon, perhaps an All-CAC in late 2019. We will share this with CAC members when available.

July- September CDWAC schedule

- Tour of SPU's Water Quality Lab on Wednesday, July 10, 3-5PM. This is a unique opportunity to explore the largest state-accredited water utility laboratory. The field trip includes an overview of water treatment, a tour of the microbiology and chemistry labs, and an interactive demonstration of water tasting performed there. The lab is in SODO (800 S Stacy St), a couple blocks from the SODO light rail stop. Onsite parking is available. Stay tuned for vanpool options. *Note: This date/time replaces the regular Water System Advisory Committee meeting.*
- Tour of the West Point Treatment Plant on Wednesday, August 21, 4-6PM. Located next to Discovery Park in Seattle, West Point is part of King County's regional wastewater treatment system. West Point treats wastewater from homes and businesses in Seattle, Shoreline, north Lake Washington, north King County and parts of south Snohomish County. West Point treats about 100 million gallons of wastewater daily, and up to 440 million gallons of stormwater and wastewater during heavy rains. We will coordinate transportation options for those who need it. *Note: This date/time replaces the regular Creeks, Drainage & Wastewater Advisory Committee meeting.*

Membership

Sheryl Shapiro requested referrals or connections.

3. SPU Side Sewer Program

Malcolm Wylie, an Environmental Compliance Inspector in SPU's Wastewater Source Control division of the Drainage and Wastewater branch, provided an overview of SPU's Side Sewer Program, and the changes to the program now that it has been transferred to Wastewater Source Control group. He discussed some of the process improvements that this shift has enabled, including communication with property owners and other sections of SPU. Wylie also highlighted some of the challenges, with the main one being affordability.

Members were asked in advance of the meeting to consider some of the following questions:

- When was the last time you had your side sewer inspected?
- Do you share a side sewer with your neighbor(s)?
- Do you have an asphalt street or a concrete panel street?
- Would you be able to access \$50,000 (or more) to do a side sewer repair?
- If you are not a homeowner, you might consider sharing these questions with homeowners you do know and bringing back their insights and thoughts.

Wylie began with an overview of the structure of the program, including how private side sewer issues are reported and investigated, and examples of some common side sewer-related repair requests. Wylie shared the regulatory requirements that drive enforcement notices (“Notice of Violation”), noting that enforcement notice can be translated into other languages.

Wylie discussed the public health implications of an example of surfacing sewage on private property where the repair was inadequate. Wylie also shared examples of voids or sinkholes, including the process for identifying responsibility for the damage. He shared examples of side sewer issues that have damaged city assets. He also shared examples of situations where SPU does not issue enforcement notices, which are primarily defective side sewers not posing a risk to public health or the environment.

SPU aims to try to contact the owner within 1 day of a report. We use billing information to contact, and we also can leave a doorhanger. A notice of violation, on average, is not issued for 3+ days. This is because the process involves a dye test, then CCTV, then the enforcement notice must go through law and sometimes be sent through certified mail. Many issues are repaired before enforcement is needed.

Lastly, Wylie walked members through a few different side sewer case studies with examples of repair costs. Wylie reviewed some of the considerations that were raised through the application of SPU’s Racial Equity Toolkit in 2018, as well as ideas to potentially address some of the financial and equity concerns. He noted that this is just one part of a wider issue of affordability related to side sewer repairs and ownership.

- **A CDWAC Member** asked if the City looks at side sewer locations when the City is planting trees in the right of way. Staff said it was a great question, and they would need to get back to them on the answer. They said they have referred some customers to Claims due to City-planted tree root issues.
- **A CDWAC Member** asked how much time is allowed for the owner to respond to a notice. Staff responded that for a surfacing sewage notice, they get 14 days from the date of notice to get a contractor out to repair it. For sink hole, they get 30 days from date of notice to repair it.
Additional info from WWSC Supervisor – Due to issues associated with contractor availability and other external factors, SPU works with homeowners to extend these deadlines as necessary barring a significant environmental or public health & safety issue.
- **A CDWAC Member** asked where proximity to a creek is reported or considered when addressing a side sewer issue. Staff responded that the criteria for the enforcement notice would show it

was an environmental risk, and not just a public health hazard. *Additional info from WWSC Supervisor – our primary drivers are public health and safety, damage to the environment and damage to public property.*

- **A guest** asked about the follow-up with the homeowner, to confirm the issue is fixed. Staff responded that SPU requests an invoice or something from their contractor. SPU can also send an inspector, or contact the individual who reported the issue, to confirm it has been fixed. Permit records are not necessarily an indicator.
- A guest asked if the number of side sewer cases is going up or down. Staff responded that SPU is on target to have about as many cases in 2019 as in 2018. Given the average age of side sewers in Seattle, staff workload could increase in the future.

Rachel Garrett, SPU Wastewater Education and Outreach Program Manager shared about the survey conducted on side sewer enforcement customers who had completed repairs. SPU saw a 15% return rate on the survey. Results showed that most respondents were mostly or completely unaware of their responsibility for their side sewer, and most had to choose their contractors based on their availability. All paid for the repairs out of pocket. Less than half reported that after the repair they would maintain their side sewer going forward. CDWAC ran out of time for a more robust discussion, so we will include a few questions in the survey.

4. Side Sewer Maintenance Research Results and Recommendations

Rachel Garrett, SPU Wastewater Education and Outreach Program Manager returned from the April CDWAC meeting to share her findings from recent side sewer maintenance research. Garrett began with a quick overview of the methodology used to promote behavior change. She then reviewed the goals of the customer research, the methodology, and the results of the survey, including awareness, behaviors, barriers, and motivators. Garrett shared some of the potential limitations of the survey, which was done jointly with SPU's Wastewater System Analysis survey. Two main drawbacks were limited demographic reach of the mailed survey and having the side sewer questions at the end of a lengthy survey. Lastly, Garrett shared the program strategy recommendations based on the research.

- There were lots of questions from CDWAC members around the tree root data in the map. Rachel shared more insights into how these were reported/how this information was gathered. The tree root data used shows severe root issues and past sanitary sewer overflows caused by roots in sewer mains, not side sewers. SPU does not have root data for private side sewers.
- There were several questions about the survey methodology:
 - Was it available electronically as well? Yes
 - Was there an incentive for participating? Yes. There was an item for a raffle.
 - Was language asked in the demographic questions? No, but 75% were Caucasian so the assumption is most were English as a first language.
- Through a straw poll, it was determined that several CAC members, guests and staff in attendance had never heard the term "side sewer" until SPU discussions.
- **A guest** asked about the average cost for side sewer inspections, as well as how frequently homeowners should have theirs inspected. Staff responded that the cost depends on the length of the side sewer, but averages are \$200-400. SPU does not have an official recommendation for regular side sewer maintenance intervals.

- **A guest** asked what a homeowner should do if they have a side sewer at risk but not yet damaged. Staff responded that a contractor may recommend you get the side sewer lined. This extends the life of the sewer. They recommended contacting a side sewer contractor.
- **A CAC Member** asked if SPU has an official stance on using chemicals for maintenance of side sewers. Staff thought it was a good question; while SPU does not promote the use of chemicals, SPU uses approved chemicals for root management in mainline pipes, and there is no regulation against the use of chemicals. ~~SPU is currently looking into this.~~
- **A CAC Member** asked (in response to Horn of Africa survey results) if there was an assumption made by homeowner participants that they could have to repair their own side sewer (versus using a contractor). They felt this could have impacted the responses. Staff were not sure but agreed that it could indicate why they responded the way they did to some questions. A copy was sent to CDWAC members.
- **A CAC Member** asked what recommendations are slated for implementation. Staff responded that SPU is currently assessing trade-offs and resources needed to implement some of the recommendations. SPU is working on developing an outreach plan with a preliminary cost analysis of proposed outreach program strategies and tactics.
- **A guest** asked about connecting with homeowners about side sewer education when they first set up a new account. Members chimed in that they thought this was a great idea, as well as including information in bill inserts, or SPU blogs.

CDWAC ran out of time for a more robust discussion, so we will include a few questions in the survey, and continue the discussion at the beginning of the July meeting, when Rachel returns to present on SPU's Fats, Oils and Grease (F.O.G.) program.

5. Customer Review Panel (CRP) update

Due to time, an update will be provided at the July meeting

6. Community Insights, Around the Table

- **A WSAC Member** shared that the University of Washington's College of the Environment is hoping to increase diversity in participants of Earth Day 2020. They requested suggestions or ideas for an event, or partnership. They suggested collaborating with SPU's Side Sewer Program.
- NW EcoBuilding Guild's educational session on Water Reuse. 6/26
- June 26: 4-6PM NW Universal Design networking. Looking at engineering and design for better inclusion of people of all abilities.
- Camp Long Arts & Nature Festival is next Friday and Saturday.
- Duwamish River Cleanup: Department of Ecology and EPA open house on June 18.
- Duwamish River Festival is coming up August 17.
- Neighborhood nights coming up on August 6.
- Maple Leaf social, July 17
- Lake City Summerfest, Aug 3

Adjourned 7:39 PM