Message

From: Debbie Chizewer [dchizewer@earthjustice.org]
Sent: 12/7/2020 2:36:42 PM
To: Walts, Alan [walts.alan@epa.gov]
Subject: Fwd: Follow-up Call on Next Steps for Centreville and Prairie du Pont Watershed Grant
Attachments: 11-25-2020 82nd Street Pipe.MOV

Hi Alan,

Please see attached and below.

Do you have a few minutes to catch up this morning?

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From: Nicole D. Nelson <nnelson@equitylegalservices.org>
Sent: Monday, November 30, 2020 1:29 PM
To: Debbie Chizewer
Cc: gary.caplan@illinois.gov; sanjay.sofat@illinois.gov; john.j.kim@illinois.gov; christine.davis@illinois.gov; brad.frost@illinois.gov; mgeertsma@nrdc.org; kjackson@ehoc-stl.org; Anna Sewell; Mary Rock; Ospina, Natalia; jim.miles@illinois.gov
Subject: Re: Follow-up Call on Next Steps for Centreville and Prairie du Pont Watershed Grant

All:
As we still await a response, please find attached a video of the sewer pipe on 82nd Street in Centreville that continues to run with sewage. This video was taken on November 25th. As instructed per Sanjay's visit on September 30th, I called Joe Stitely on that same date and I have not received a response.

Additionally, since November 24th, at least two residents have been suffering from raw sewage seeping into their lawns; both residents reside on North 80th Street.

-Nicole

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On Mon, Nov 23, 2020 at 5:42 PM Debbie Chizewer <dchizewer@earthjustice.org> wrote:

Dear John, Sanjay, and Gary—

We are writing to follow up on our August 18, 2020 letter and our September 3, 2020 phone call. We appreciate that Illinois EPA has taken more interest in the failing sewage and stormwater infrastructure since that letter and conversation. IEPA's initial outreach efforts with Centreville Citizens for Change are also welcome. However, considering the ongoing nature of the flooding and contamination issues, the Centreville Citizens for Change members are anxious to hear a substantive update and want to flag some concerns about the recently announced grant opportunity.

Indeed, during the September 3 call, everyone acknowledged the need to identify short- and long-term solutions. Sanjay described three short-term solutions:

1. Clean out of Harding Ditch so that it no longer chokes the flow of water.
2. Creation of a detention pond so that it can hold rain until a time when it would be safer to pump it out.
3. Add pumps to lift stations that are missing pumps (which may involve adding electric)

Please provide us with a status update and timeline for these short-term as well as laying out a timeline for developing the long-term solutions and a time for us to discuss your work to date on funding the necessary projects.

In addition to wanting to learn more about next steps to accomplishing the solutions, we wanted to alert you to our concerns regarding the recent Prairie du Pont Watershed grant opportunity and press release that was shared with us in recent days. While we are encouraged to see that more resources may be devoted to solving the dire sewage and stormwater issues, we are concerned that Centreville Citizens for Change was not engaged in the process of developing this idea or the drafting of the press release. If IEPA is attempting to develop a grant opportunity designed "to develop a community-endorsed watershed-based plan," it seems critical that community leaders are involved early in this process. This failure to share information is particularly concerning in light of IEPA's more regular attendance at the Centreville Citizens for Change meetings; indeed, this fits with a troubling pattern that IEPA representatives attend the resident meetings but do not provide sufficient, substantive information or updates. On several occasions already, we have

highlighted the need to have Bureau of Water staff with substantive knowledge, in addition to the community engagement staff, regularly participate in the meetings.

Having raised these issues, we don't think it is too late for IEPA to engage residents in the vetting process for the grant applicants to ensure that the recipient would work well with the community to develop a community-endorsed plan. If IEPA believes a grant opportunity designed "to develop a community-endorsed watershed-based plan" will be an important component to solving the flooding and overflow crisis in Centreville, it should involve community leaders *early* to provide input on how the grant opportunity fits into the overall strategy. Further, you can require the grant applicants to make a presentation at one of the upcoming Centreville Citizens for Change meetings.

Beyond our concerns about the failure to date to work with the community to develop this grant opportunity, we are troubled about the very short turn-around for this grant application. Is it possible to extend the timeline and still meet whatever internal deadlines you may be facing? As it stands, it is so unusually short that it raises a question about whether a particular entity has been pre-selected for this opportunity. In particular, if Lochmueller is the entity that IEPA has in mind for this opportunity, we request that you consider potential conflicts of interest. We are happy to provide more information as appropriate. Further, please commit to the requisite transparency and due diligence, including—at a minimum—the requirements of the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act.

Considering the fast-moving nature of the grant, and the need to move forward with short-term solutions for the community, we would like to schedule a call for the week of November 30. Please advise as to your availability for a call.

Thanks much,

Debbie Chizewer

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