

Speakers:

Jim Green – La Grange Highlands Civic Association President

Christopher Getty—Township Supervisor, Lyons Township

6404 JOLIET RD.
COUNTRYSIDE, IL 60525
708-482-8300

The township supervisor is chief executive officer of the township, chairman of the town(ship) board of trustees, supervisor of general assistance, and is treasurer of all town funds and all road and bridge funds

Sean McDermott—Lyons Township Highway Commissioner

8257 Willow Springs Rd.
Willow Springs, IL 60480
708-839-0051
lyonstwp.hwy@sbcglobal.net

Over 20 miles of road are maintained by the Lyons Township Highway Department. They also provide a variety of services throughout the year for the residents of unincorporated Lyons Township. Services include branch clipping, street repairs, storm damage clean-up, drainage solutions, excavation, snow removal and salting.

Jim Cainkar, Frank Novotny & Associates Inc, Lyons Township Engineer

Ms. Rubina Alam, Cook County Zoning Administrator

69 W. Washington Rm 2830
Chicago, IL 60602
(312) 603-0503
<https://www.cookcountyil.gov/agency/building-and-zoning-0>

James O'Rourke –Property Inspector

Cook County Zoning Issues and Ordinances
7600 West 103rd St, Room #064
Bridgeview, IL 60455
info.bnz@cookcountyil.gov
708-947-6268

Neil Pellmann P.E.

Will-South Cook Soil and Water Conservation District
1201 S. Gougar Road
New Lenox, IL 60451
815-462-3106
Neil.pellmann@will-scookswcd.org

Services include tree & shrub stocking sale, pond management and engineering information, drainage/flood assessment & planning, soil & water resource information. Products include composters, soil test kits, native plant guides and education and resource materials.

Dominic Tocci-- Deputy Director

Cook County Department of Planning & Development
69 West Washington, Suite 2900

Chicago, Illinois 60602
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Adam James P.E.CFM – Drainage and Utilities Manager,
Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways
George W. Dunne Cook County Office Building
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Chicago, Illinois 60602
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Holly Sauter, Senior Civil Engineer –Stormwater section-
Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago
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I. Jim Green thanked everyone for attending and gave a brief introduction of the La Grange Highlands Civic Association's purpose.

II. Mr. Getty introduced himself and spoke about the roles and functions of Lyons Township.

III. Sean McDermott spoke briefly about the role of the Highway Commissioner. He displayed a color coordinated map showing streets that have had road repairs and resurfacing since 2011 in addition culverts that have been replace. Many driveway culverts have been replaced and several more are scheduled for culvert repairs. Sean reminded us that this area was once a wetland and we need to consider that when we think of how we move drainage.

IV. Jim Cainkar Township Engineer, stated it is good to be high, and all in all water flows well with the township maintaining the culverts. He stated the township is aware of the location of the drain outlets and the watersheds in town. He mentioned anything in the resident's back yard is county property. The township does not have the authority to access backyards to perform services. Culverts need to be unplugged and maintained to keep water flowing to the outlets.

A resident at 52nd Place, La Grange Highlands, stated that the street on her block is in poor shape and the neighboring La Grange Hospital property floods 52nd Place and holds water in the culverts. Sean stated this ongoing problem and has been address previously with La Grange who owns the street but he will reach out to La Grange again and discuss the flooding issue as well.

A resident at 60th Peck stated the culverts near him are temporary fixes.

A resident at 63rd and Laurel commented water drains North and pools in the backyards. Sean stated the jurisdiction of the Highway Commissioner is only 33 feet from the center line of the road. If a structure starts at the road goes into the backyard then the Highway Department would have access to maintain those structures, otherwise they do not have jurisdiction in the backyards.

A resident at 63rd Laurel also had concerns about 65th Street's disrepair. Sean stated that street is similar to 52nd Street in that it is not a Highlands street. Although Highlands residents homes abut the street, 65th is owned by Indian Head Park and it must be repaired by them.

A resident stated 58th and Sunset's back yard is a lake. Sean stated many ditches work well; every time the township resurfaces a street they look at the ditches. Residents should help maintain culverts and ditches if blocked so water can continue to flow. Sean stated it is difficult to get water to move in a flat area.

A resident at 55th Place, stated drainage ditches do not appear to be appropriately sized. He stated the sewer and water systems were designed 75 years ago and today they do not make sense. He feels an increased size of many street culverts is necessary.

A resident mentioned there are a lot of "tear down" homes which take up more space. As people build a big home they grade as they want, affecting others.

A resident on W. 59th Street stated in the past, trees helped with water absorption. Those trees are now removed due to emerald ash and the property puddles.

Sean provided his cell number for all to contact him and he will get out to look at the culverts and flooding issues.

A resident at 62nd and Sunset stated yards flood because Sean put a large culvert pipe going directly into their yard. She wanted to know if a permit is required to change such a pipe and why would it be directed into their backyards? Sean stated the entire highlands flows into private property.

Mention was made of a drain at 58th and Edgewood doesn't look deep enough when it rains heavy it doesn't seem to flow (58th Sunset) it goes south but the ditch doesn't work.

V. Neil Pellman spoke next regarding the office he represents. He stated his office is available to help landowner with drainage issues. He recommended all look at the Blue Book Illinois Urban manual, a document free on the website and it takes you through steps to point out concerns, leads to alternatives and action plans. He stated there are Individual conservation standards to address these issues. He mentioned his office has limited funding to install conservation efforts for streambank stabilization, planning and design. He also mentioned they work with the Army Corp of Engineers.

VI. The next speaker was Ms. Alum from Cook County Building and Zoning. She stated her office has three roles. Building Inspections, permitting and violations. Her office works with unincorporated areas in the county. The office updated to paperless permitting. Permits go through zoning review, permitting and electrical review. Permit Control manages the process, deficiencies are written up and an email notification is sent to the homeowner to reply to those deficiencies. The office checks that contractors are registered with the Cook County offices. To proceed, permits need to be approved, violations checked and payments posted.

An audience member asked who set the grades for the elevation on new homes. Ms. Alum stated if civil engineering drawing are provided the drawing goes to review.

Q- Does Cook County come out to inspect?

A-Yes when foundations are in place Cook County comes out to inspect. How much you can build is by floor area ratio. No regulations for the height of foundations.

Q- When a giant house is built on existing property higher and eliminate green space, while the existing ditch has not been increased, how do we maintain that or correct that? Jim O'Rourke explained that the building code allows higher elevations.

Q- How do we address the building code issue?

A- That is a different department and not part of Building and Zoning. Building and Zoning follows building codes, this problem is everywhere, Highlands is worse because it was a swampland. (Talk to County Commissioner Sean Morrison)

A resident provided a questions regarding basements. Ms. Alum stated basements do cause problems, the only control is how big you can build and home much land you can build on. The total buildable area on a property must not exceed 35% (new code since July 2018)

Ms. Alum started to read the list of questions that were provided to her, Jim asked if we could go back to them once every panel member had a chance to speak.

VII. The next speaker was Adam James with the Cook County Highway Department. Mr. James mentioned the county is responsible for Plainfield Road, Wolf Road and Brainard Avenue. Willow Springs Road and 55th Street fall under the jurisdiction of IDOT.

There is a project in Phase I that will start from County Line Road to East Avenue on Plainfield Road.

Phase II will detail design engineering followed by actual building. The county expects Phase I & II to be complete in 5 years.

The project will include reconstruction of roadway to address deficiencies. The expectations of the project include:

1. Improved safety
2. Accommodate 2040 Traffic Volumes
3. Improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations

Completion of the project will include public outreach and stakeholder involvement and coordination with MWRD 's corridor study.

VIII. Dominic Tocci from Cook County Planning and Development spoke on available federal disaster funding to address damage from the 2013 flooding. He showed a FEMA flood plain map of the Highlands which provided a general location of homes that that initiated a claim with FEMA. Dominic stated there were not many claims, but he stated that doesn't mean impact did not occur. He specified it could mean people didn't know they could file a claim. If damage was in the home and it was not completely fixed yet and if there are insurance claims or pictures, an opportunity remains to address these issues. He stated if anyone knows of others who have experienced problems from the 2013 flooding, please contact him. He can be reached at Dominic.tocci@cookcountyil.gov.

IX. The final speaker was Holly Sauter with the MWRD. She talked about the Plainfield Corridor project, which runs from Willow Springs Road to East Avenue on Plainfield Road. Ms. Sauter stated Willow Springs Road is the high point to the west and the drainage flows west from there. South of Plainfield Road drains south to the Des Plaines River. The project will benefit the majority of people that are on Peck Avenue. This project will also pick up the water near 55th and Plainfield road in that blue bubble on the map Dominic displayed in his presentation. MWRD is looking to get the biggest bang for the buck and partner with road agencies by increasing the pipe size to facilitate as much water as possible to move it along out of low lying areas. The first phase of the study will be done by

the end of this year. The MWRD will assess what benefit will be received for the dollars spent. If the project is good the MWRD would expect it to move to final design next year.

Ms. Sauter spoke of three programs that the MWRD will be or are currently doing to manage stormwater and could be available to the La Grange Highlands.

1. Phase II program- partner with local communities on their flooding issues. The community looks at specific areas where they know there is problem flooding, brings in the design like an engineering study, but the community has no or very little money for construction. MWRD will look into it and try to get it fixed.
2. Master Planning Program – The Township would need to be the applicant. Data would need to be collected relating to who floods, where and how it floods, group the data together and apply to the program for consideration for a master plan. The master plan would address stormwater control in the future through various projects and private property initiatives.
3. Projects can also be addressed through green infrastructure projects such as permeable pavers, rain gardens (applicable to backyard issues) and bioswales. The application process is completed by the local municipality who brings in an engineering study (it can be from the past) to apply. MWRD picks out how many people the project can help with structural flooding (street and backyards are nuisance flooding). There are currently 120 communities where flooding fills the basement and 1st floors. The MWRD will look at benefit to cost ratio first. They do not pay 100%, rather it is a sliding scale payment.

MWRD will often partner with other agencies to help alleviate flooding. In our community, MWRD partnered with IDOT at Willow Springs Road and Plainfield by asking IDOT to upsize the pipe and relieve flooding from a home on south of Plainfield on WSR.

If the project goes through, MWRD will put a large sewer under Plainfield Road when the County does the street project on Plainfield Road.

Q - Someone asked why they didn't go through to County Line Road.

A - Ms. Sauter stated the county said the biggest bang for the buck is from Willow Springs Road to East Avenue.

Q- How does MWRD collect flooding data?

A - Data for the La Grange Highlands was collected by Mike McGuire from the Civic Association brought surveys to an open house event in La Grange relating to stormwater issues in this area.

Q- There is concern with new construction and elevation of new homes, and is there any way the panel could implement a stormwater detention pond to capture the rainwater?

A - The MWRD's Watershed Management Ordinance contains similar requirements but those requirements apply to large projects or new developments, and not single family homes.

Q - What would it take to amend the code for new construction to implement stormwater detention basin?

Ms. Alum stated that homeowner associations up north have their own conveyance and restriction which is more stringent than the county's. When this occurs the county will follow the overarching more stringent code. It may be possible to appeal to the township to implement a code.

Q- How was the amendment done for the 35% buildable area? Many areas like the Highlands had problems so it was a means to address and control the issue.

The suggestion was mentioned to talk to the Commissioner to amend the ordinance.

Q- Is there any consideration to expand the intersection at Brainard and Joliet Road? Particularly with the new countryside hall project? (Sean was no longer at the meeting to respond)

A resident at 61st and Brainard stated Brainard Avenue does not have culverts, they were taken out and sewer systems were put in. The home next door has no height restriction, they put in a "reservoir" a "10 diameter piping went from one sewer to the other when it rains they overflow". She stated every neighbor has a sewer in front with the exception of her home. Everything in back and front get flooded but the new home has no problem. She stated the Building and Zoning department should have ensured all is done properly. She has lived in her home 40 years, now she feels homeowners have to spend their own money and building and zoning doesn't. She said she has no culvert, no way of water to move off the property. Her property is eroding.

Response- Check with the zoning board for final grade survey. The engineering department is who passes the grading survey.

Q- Who does someone contact for resolution or re-inspection?

Q- If we have a question about a permit and execution of the plan, who do we call?

A- Downtown building department.

The resident at 61st Brainard stated she called numerous times and someone comes out and says "it looks like you have a problem" and "off they go".

A (CC)- Building goes by code. A survey is done at the end of construction to verify what was submitted to the building and zoning department initially for approval. If someone does something later nothing will be known unless someone calls about it.

Changing the grade and flooding is part of the planning department.

Q- When new homes are built, who is reviewing? Who can we talk to?

A (CC)- Grading is reviewed by civil engineers. If just a survey is necessary, it is reviewed by building and zoning.

Q- Is there a contact number?

A (CC) – Call downtown.

Ms. Alum would like a list of concerned inspections for homes built on higher property and the name of the requestor to respond to. Ms. Alum stated she will get those sites reviewed. Send to [Ms. Alum.alam@cookcountyil.gov](mailto:Ms.Alum.alam@cookcountyil.gov)

A - Jim O'Rourke stated he will look at the field report final grade survey at the house on the corner by 61st Brainard. He will ascertain if it passed the Engineering review.

Q- Gary Stepina asked who does someone contact to get resolution and re-inspection for this type of thing?

Q - Jim Green asked if someone has a concern about a piece of property how do they funnel it through CC?

Q – Gary Stepina- If we have a question on a permit and execution of a plan who do we call?

A (CC)- Call the building department.

A resident from 61st Brainard, stated she called Cook County Building Department and they never call back.

Jim Green asked about the impact of basements being built or new construction. How does that affect the water table?

A - (CC)- Zoning has no way of controlling how they build as long as it's within requirements or codes.

Q - Mike Golm asked if Soil and Water has any input.

A – Mr. Pellmann stated an individual can contact his office and they can provide the research done on soil types and what the land capabilities are. Especially with this being a known wetland. Mr. Pellman asked that residents check the website: NRCSwebsoilsurvey.gov – give location and can find research on the soil type for individual address or area.

Q- Jim Green asked about natural solutions relating to flooding such as trees, shrubs etc.

A- Ms. Sauter stated brochures are available on rain gardens, soil drainage natural vegetation etc. Maintenance is a requirement. The options will help some people in the Highlands but not all.

MWRD does not aide individual homes.

Neil Pellmann mentioned some funding from there organization for individual homes is available.

Jim Green asked Ms. Sauter to speak about the IDOT project on 55th Street just west of La Grange Road. IDOT is redoing 55th street just west La Grange Road to East Ave, adding a new lane in the middle to add turning lane partly funded by the Joliet Road closure. They are doing minimal drainage. The La Grange Highlands Civic Association website has details relating to this.

Q- Is there any way MWRD or FEMA can allocate money to establish a long term hydraulic model?

A- Ms. Sauter stated this area is a separate sewer area and that MWRD as stated earlier is setting up a

Master Planning group that will be divided into 2 types of Master Plans:

1. Combined areas
2. Separate sewer areas

Next year MWRD will accept applications for stormwater master planning assistance in your area as long as MWRD can partner with a government agency you can apply. (La Grange Highlands can partner with the Township) MWRD requires that the application must come from a government organization.

Q- Who maintains utility easements? A resident on 59th Street, has a forest behind his house which borders Willow Springs Road and 5-6 houses have unkempt property which impedes water movement.

A- Jim O'Rourke stated he will investigate that site, but keep in mind, all violations have 30 days for

compliance.

Q- A women stated she has a fence that is 3 feet over the property line on the easement. She would like to replace her fence, does she have to back it up to the property line or can she keep it where it lies?

A- (Cook County (CC))- (Ms. Alum) stated she has to back it up to the property line because a homeowner cannot build on an easement. No special variance can be applied for in this case. Permit will require the fence be on the property line.

Q- Could someone get speed bumps installed on their street?

A- (CC) (Mr. James)- If 90% of the residents on that street agree and sign a petition. He asked to keep in mind:

- People try to drive around (no curbs, makes that possible)
- If it is a township road, they will need county approval as well
- It could be a nuisance, speed bumps impact snow removal and impede first responders.

Q- A resident who lives on Wolf Road stated one corner at the intersection of Plainfield and Wolf Road has a No Turn on Red, this leads to increased wait time to get home. He is wondering why only one corner of the 4 has that type of signage.

A (CC) (Mr. James)- Each location signage is looked at uniquely. During the Plainfield Road Corridor study that will get reviewed.

Q- Mike Golm- What are the regulations for RV's parked in driveways or on personal property like the yard? (and also commercial vehicles?)

A-(CC)- Commercial vehicles cannot be parked in the driveway, they must be in the garage or landscaped screen. Jim Green- How do you define commercial vehicles? CC- The license plate or logo on the side of the truck.

Q- Mike Golm- What about Jet Skis/Boats?

A- (CC) (Mr. O'Rourke)- Jet Skis and Boats are addressed seasonally, for example if it is summer and the boat is in the driveway they do not issue violations. It cannot be stored year round. It can go in the backyard can't be seen from the right of way of another zoned lot. If the neighbor can see the boat from their yard that's an issue.

Q - What about blight issues?

A -(CC)- Building and Zoning only deal with construction or vacant buildings.

Q- If property encompasses and easement (fence or inside), can it be moved on the outside of the easement?

A - (CC) the plat of survey is needed with the permit application to determine what is allowed.

Meeting adjourned 8:00 p.m.