



Wightman Park Stormwater Project: Phase Two Virtual Community Meeting Minutes 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 5, 2020

Rebecca Zito, Acting Senior Manager of Public Affairs at the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) welcomed meeting participants and explained the purpose of the meeting. Meeting participants introduced themselves and shared their interest in this project. Participants included 16 residents, City of Pittsburgh Councilwoman Erika Strassburger, and Strassburger’s Chief of Staff.

Jim Turner, Senior Stormwater Group Manager at PWSA began the presentation by providing an overview of stormwater issues in Pittsburgh, our combined sewer system, and how green infrastructure can help capture and slow stormwater.

Phase One of the Wightman Park Stormwater Project is currently under construction and expected to be completed later this fall. Phase One is a joint effort between the City of Pittsburgh and PWSA and includes park amenities and stormwater management. The Phase One improvements have been sized and designed to manage stormwater from almost 30 acres in and around the park.

Barton Kirk, Ecological Engineer at Ethos Collaborative explained how the Phase Two improvements will convey the stormwater that falls in the neighborhood to the park. Stormwater planters will intercept and redirect stormwater at four intersections: Wightman Street and Solway Street, Negley Avenue and Solway Street, Negley Avenue and Woodmont Street, and Murray Avenue and Solway Street. A long linear planter will also be installed along Solway Street in front of the school, with a step out zone for vehicle passengers and pavement connections to the sidewalk. The planters, some trench drains, and an underground pipe crossing will carry the stormwater to the park. Rainfall of up to 1.5 inches will enter the planters, while rainfall above that amount will enter new stormwater inlets that lead to the combined sewer system. The plant species for the planters have been selected for their ability to tolerate and thrive in salty, tough conditions.

In total, PWSA is investing \$3.3 million to address stormwater issues through Phase One and Phase Two of the Wightman Park Stormwater Project. The overall project will provide enhanced park drainage and natural water features, improved pedestrian safety and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility, new street trees, upgraded storm inlets, and improved sewer performance.

Phase Two design is finishing up and construction is expected to start in spring 2021 and continue through fall 2021. The construction will be done in sequenced phases to minimize disruption to the entire neighborhood. PWSA will recommend that the construction contractor start at Wightman Street and Solway Street, then Midblock Solway Street, then Negley Avenue and Solway Street and Negley Ave and Woodmont Street, then finish with Murray Avenue and Solway Street.

The presentation and the following question and answer session were recorded and are available at www.pgh2o.com/wightman-park-2.

Discussion:

Comments in red below are updates since the August 5, 2020 meeting.

- Question: I have tried to use an endoscope to see where our gutter downspout goes but couldn't find it. Where does the old house's gutter downspout go? Is it to the city sewer or just deeper into the ground or to a drywell?
 - Answer: Without inspecting the house, we can't say for sure, but based on the age of homes in this area, there's a good chance that your gutter downspout is connected into the sewer lateral for the home, which flows to the city sewer system. If you see a downspout entering a pipe into the ground, it is likely tied into the existing combined sewer. There are a few instances where drywells have been created, but it's certainly not the norm in the City of Pittsburgh. As part of this project, we did a street-level survey to identify homes that had downspouts that were visibly disconnected when viewed from the street. We incorporated the roof areas that were contributing stormwater to the street versus directly to the combined sewer system into our stormwater calculations, so that we could capture the stormwater from existing disconnected downspouts in the improvements.
 - Comment from Resident: I have recently dealt with a clogged downspout drain myself, and I heard the water go through the sewer outlet.
- Question: We have wet basement issues, and we are planning on redoing the driveway. Just wondering whether there's a recommended way of rainwater discharge. Is it recommended to free drain away from the house to the yard/street? Or to drywells on our own yard? Or rain barrels?
 - Answer: It used to be a health department regulation that any downspouts in the City of Pittsburgh had to connect directly to the sewers. The Green Infrastructure Network helped revise that to allow people to disconnect their downspouts to a rain garden, their yard, or a cistern. **Any improvements of this type should be completed in compliance with the Allegheny County Health Department's Plumbing Code Article XV, particularly Chapter 11, available at https://www.alleghenycounty.us/uploadedFiles/Allegheny_Home/Health_Department/Article-15-Plumbing-Code.pdf.**
- Question: Can you provide an update about the baseball field or basketball courts within the park?
 - Answer: The new baseball field, playgrounds, basketball court, and pavilion are wrapping up construction right now and should be completed by October. It wasn't possible to fit a full-sized baseball field within the park, so the field is a tee-ball sized field.
- Question: We just got new curb cutouts at Negley Avenue and Woodmont Street. Was this part of the plan?

- Answer: Those are unfortunately not part of the plan. We have been coordinating with the City of Pittsburgh throughout this project, but that one seems to have slipped by the coordination. We will be replacing the new curb ramp at that location as part of our work.
- Comment: Will more of Solway Street become one way?
 - Answer: No. The section of Solway Street between Negley Avenue and Wightman Street will remain one way. However, the bump-outs are designed so that any of the streets could be one-way or two-way temporarily or permanently in the future. That design feature was requested by the City of Pittsburgh Department of Mobility and Infrastructure (DOMI).
- Question: Who will be maintaining the planting areas at bump outs? Is there a chance for residents to help?
 - Answer: Currently, we have a maintenance program with an outside contractor for all of our green infrastructure projects. At the moment, we have about eight or 10 different projects that we are maintaining, and this Wightman Park Stormwater Project: Phase Two would be added to that list. We haven't yet had a program of collaborating with local residents on maintenance, but that is something we can talk about more. Jim Turner asked the resident with this question to send him an email at jturner@pgh2o.com to look into that further.
 - Comment from Barton Kirk: In addition, the City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Works is interested in resident's assistance for maintaining the rain garden and plantings within the park itself.
 - Comment from Councilwoman Erika Strassburger: It's been on hold for a year or so, but we had been in discussions with Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition about the possibility of creating a Friends of Wightman Park. That would be an opportunity to volunteer with plantings and could expand to right-of-way maintenance as well.
- Question: At Negley Avenue and Woodmont Street the gutter grates are often heavily clogged with debris in the fall. How do these catch basins deal with that?
 - Answer: Where stormwater is intercepted at each of these stormwater planters, there will be a concrete forebay. A forebay is a small basin that collects leaf debris and sediment. There will be a little weir that holds that debris back but allows stormwater to pass through. The forebay allows easy removal of debris before it clogs the rest of the system.
- Question: Are there any other infrastructure changes that we should expect?
 - Answer: There will be some utility poles relocated a few feet along Solway Street. Communications and electric service should be maintained during those periods, but there is always a chance of service disruption. There will also be some gas line

relocation, which will be timed to occur during off peak use to minimize disruption in gas service. We will be providing service line protection to the homes. There will be some valve relocation work. There will be some brief breaks in water and gas service while those valves are being relocated to the service lines, which will particularly impact the homes at the corner of Negley Avenue and Solway Street.