



## Deerfield Regional Storm Water District

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### DISTRICT DISCUSSES GREENFIELD PLACE STORM SEWER PROJECT

#### *District Intends to Contribute Half of Design/Construction Costs*

The Deerfield Regional Storm Water District held a public information meeting on December 9, 2008 to share details about its pending Greenfield Place storm sewer repair project to eliminate two large sinkholes causing extensive flooding during rain events. The meeting was organized by the District Board of Trustees as a way to educate residents about the project and the associated special assessment, and to answer residents' questions. The District also announced its intention to use District funds to pay for one-half of the design and construction costs of the project, up to \$200,000.00.

"Detailed letters were sent to each property owner who will benefit from the project and we invited them to the meeting to hear more details," said Walter Daniels, President of the District Board of Trustees. "We want the people to understand the project and how it helps them so they know why they are being asked to help pay for it."

The project involves the removal and installation of roughly 1,000 combined feet of 42 and 48 inch under ground storm sewer pipe in the Greenfield Place subdivision in Deerfield Township (Warren County). The existing pipe, installed by the original developer of the subdivision, has failed in at least two places and is showing signs of stress elsewhere. The collapsed pipe has created two ever-expanding sinkholes in residents' backyards and washed large quantities of dirt, rocks and debris into the storm sewer conveyance system. This has caused the system to malfunction, resulting in street and yard flooding.

"While we certainly want to correct the flooding issues, our immediate concern is to eliminate the sinkholes which pose a considerable threat to the safety of our residents, particularly the children," said Daniels.

Residents approached the District, the Township and the County asking for assistance with the sinkholes. Because the underground pipe is not located within a road right-of-way, neither the Township nor the County believes they are responsible for making the repairs. After hearing the residents' complaints and analyzing the situation, the District Board decided that someone needed to assume a leadership role and fix this problem. The Board asked its engineering firm to investigate the scope of the problem and make recommendations.

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"Fortunately, for all of our residents, the Deerfield Township Trustees had the foresight to create this District a number of years ago," said Daniels. "If this problem had occurred in any other unincorporated area of Warren County, implementing a solution would be left to the homeowners."

Prior to the December 9 informational meeting, the District Board adopted a resolution in which it declared its intent to contribute District funds to pay for half of the project design and construction costs, up to \$200,000.00. The District has already spent approximately \$50,000.00 investigating the problem and trying to determine the scope of the pipe failure.

The District thinks its efforts to fix the problem make a lot more sense once people know the facts. "When people understand how a project benefits their property, they seem to be more accepting of a proposed assessment. They also realize that the sinkholes could just as easily have been in their backyard and the District's management of the repairs results in a more equitable distribution of costs."

Under the special assessment process, the District would borrow the remaining funds through a loan. That loan would be paid back over time with revenue collected from a special assessment which will be levied on all properties which derive a benefit from the project. A professional appraiser specializing in these types of projects was hired to work with the District's engineer and lawyer to determine which properties will benefit from the project. Over 600 parcels were identified, either because their storm water eventually flows through the failed pipe or because their water flows to the same detention pond. The identified properties benefit when the entire system functions properly, which is not currently the case. Those properties will be assessed an equal share of the project costs not covered by the District, although the District has not yet adopted any formal action with respect to an assessment.

Daniels acknowledged that some residents may not immediately recognize the benefit of the project to their property, but sites several benefits: "While the project will fix the flooding issues and the sinkholes, it has a much larger impact. A flooded street prevents homeowners from driving to their homes, children from getting to the bus stop and is a continuing headache our residents should not have to endure every time we have a larger than normal rainfall. Fixing the problem helps to maintain property values because it lets people know problems are addressed in Deerfield Township."

Given the many variables beyond the District's control, the Board is not willing to provide definite timelines for completion of the project, though they hope to begin construction by spring of 2009.

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