

**UNIVERSITY CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION**

5th Floor of City Hall
6801 Delmar
May 22, 2017
5:30 p.m.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The City Council Study Session was held in Council Chambers on the fifth floor of City Hall, on Monday, May 22, 2017. Mayor Welsch called the Study Session to order at 5:30 p.m. In addition, the following members of Council were present:

Councilmember Rod Jennings; (*Arrived at 5:38 p.m.*)
Councilmember Paulette Carr
Councilmember Steven McMahon
Councilmember Terry Crow
Councilmember Michael Glickert
Councilmember Bwayne Smotherson

Also in attendance was Interim City Manager, Charles Adams; Special Counsel, John F. Mulligan; Director of Public Works and Parks, Sinan Alpaslan; MSD Project Manager, Steven Roberts; MSD Assistant Director of Engineering, Brad Nevois; Public Information Manager, Lance LeComb; Senior Project Manager for Wade Trim, John Weiland, and Andy Likes, Rebecca Loslie and Jim Calls from Burns & McDonnell.

Councilmember Crow stated either by consensus at this meeting or by motion during the regular meeting, he would ask that Council give consideration to allowing citizen participation throughout the Council Business portion of the agenda; specifically on items that require a vote.

Hearing no other requests, Mayor Welsch proceeded as follows:

AGENDA

(Requested by Interim City Manager, Charles Adams)

1. MSD Storage Facility Proposed Locations

Director of Public Works and Parks, Sinan Alpaslan provided the following background associated with MSD's Proposal for a Waste Water Storage Facility in U City.

In November of 2015, staff was approached by MSD to discuss their proposal to construct a wastewater storage facility in the area bounded by 82nd Blvd., the south and east River Des Peres Main Channel, and Canton Avenue. The project aims to alleviate surcharges of the sewer system during wet weather under MSD's Project Clear Program.

Initially, MSD's method for wastewater storage was an underground tunnel. The storage removes the surcharge from the system where it is temporarily retained and placed back into the system after the rain event.

Due to engineering concerns, this method was later revised to above-ground storage tanks. Staff inquired whether MSD would be willing to consider alternative locations for visible above-ground storage tanks; i.e., the south side of Olive Blvd., from 81st Street to the River Des Peres Main Channel. MSD presented staff with the results of their investigation in November of 2016, which found the alternative location to be unfeasible based on the following rationale:

- Constructability concerns for bringing sewer discharge from the sewer collection area to south of Olive Blvd., which would require moving more flow into the storage location.
- A retaining wall adjacent to 81st Street that was too close for construction clearances and an existing restaurant that would have to be removed.
- Large pump house required to pump sewer from north of Olive Blvd. to the south of Olive Blvd.

Mr. Alpaslan stated at this point, he would like to turn the meeting over to the representatives from MSD who will present additional information on the two options as outlined for the proposed storage facility.

Andy Likes, Consultant for Burns & McDonnell, introduced the following members of the project team; Rebecca Losli of Burns & McDonnell; Jim Calls, Project Manager for Burns & McDonnell, Steven Roberts, Project Manager for MSD, Brad Nevois, Assistant Director of Engineering for MSD, and John Weiland, Senior Project Manager for Wade Trim. Mr. Likes stated each member of the team will present various aspects of the project, and at the conclusion of their presentation Council would be provided with an opportunity to ask questions.

Background: Project Clear-Lemay

- MSD is both a stormwater and wastewater utility
- MSD covers approximately 525 square miles, which includes 90 municipalities; has 1.3 million customers and 7 treatment plants
- All of U City's stormwater and wastewater drains into the Lemay treatment plant

Mr. Likes stated problems caused by excessive rainwater are a result of sewers built many years ago that were not designed to handle today's capacity. So, in order to achieve the project's long-term initiative to improve water quality and alleviate surcharges of the sewer system, old sewers are being repaired and maintained; new sewers are being added; storage tanks are being built, and sump pumps, as well as downspouts, are being removed from sewer systems to increase their capacity across the entire St. Louis region.

(Video Presentation Depicting Proposed Storage Tanks)

U City Characteristics

- Two separate storage tanks buried 13 feet underground
- Each tank holds approximately 4.6 million gallons of water that are diverted back into the sewer system once pipes have capacity
- Several new sewers will be built in order to gain access to the tanks

- The system will include unmanned pump stations and an odor control unit that can be activated automatically

Why Project Clear; Why Now

Ms. Losli stated Project Clear has been designed to help reduce wastewater overflows from the sanitary collection system, basement backups within U City and other municipalities, increase the reliability of MSD's system, and develop a utility of the future for decades to come.

Ms. Losli provided Council with an 11 X 7 photograph of a map illustrating the following information:

- **Gray lines** = model sewers that are greater than 12 inches. MSD uses these hydraulic technical models to analyze sewer capacities.
- **Red labels** = where overflows have been determined.
- **Purple dots** = water backups due to overcharged mains from rain water. There are over 600 dots in U City representing approximately 400 locations.
- U City's watershed is located in the northern portion of the Lemay Service area. MSD's planning is determined on a watershed basis and the map indicates the highest parts of the watershed that flow into the lower parts of the topography where pipes can be as large as 78 inches in diameter.

Ms. Losli provided Council with another map to help facilitate their understanding of why the storage tanks should be built in U City. The major trunk sewers for the watershed are shown in different colors. And hydraulic models have shown that the Hafner Court storage facility, which will be a junction for three major sanitary sewers; the UR-10 branch; UR-6 Branch, and UR-8 & 9 Branch, represents the ideal strategic location.

- Two additional storage facilities are planned for the U City watershed where overflow will be stored before entering the combined sewer system.
- Strategic locations for additional facilities have also been identified for the City of Pagedale.

Storage tanks have either been completed or designed for areas similar to the options discussed at tonight's meeting.

- **Completed** - St. Ann's Coldwater Tank for Lambert Airport; thirteen residential buyouts were associated with this 6 million gallon storage facility located near the Cypress exit.
- **In Progress** - Crestwood's Gravois Creek Sanitary Storage Facility; consisting of two 8 million gallon tanks situated between residential and commercially zoned properties.

Why now? Ms. Losli stated MSD's Project Clear is a long-term effort by the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District undertaken as part of an agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Missouri Coalition for the Environment. Contained within this program are numerous projects focused on three categories of work: Get the rain out; Repair and maintain, and Build system improvements. In order to accomplish all three phases of this program, it is critical that MSD maintains its estimated timeframe and continues to move forward with the planning and designing of these system improvements.

Site Options

Mr. Calls stated the map provided by Ms. Losli that illustrates where the three major sewers converge is the location MSD is looking to build these storage facilities.

He stated that per the request of Mr. Alpaslan, an underground facility, as well as another location had been evaluated. However, Operations concluded that the rock cover did not present the ideal thickness needed to build a safe underground facility, and the proposed location of Olive Blvd. demonstrated problems associated with the retaining wall and necessitated pumping water across Olive Blvd. to the site, which was deemed to be unfeasible. So, here are the characteristics of the two options being proposed.

Option One - The Hafner Court area is common to both Option One and Two. Sewage will be picked up from the west, taken to the storage tanks, and then once the tanks are drained the water will flow across Hafner Court and back into the sewer system.

- Option One utilizes approximately 6 acres
- Requires the acquisition of the Hafner Court Apartments and 31 residential parcels; 50 percent rental; 50 percent owner-occupied
- Eighteen of the 31 parcels are within the one hundred year flood plain
- It will consist of two, 4.6 million gallon tanks; 180 foot in diameter; 35 feet above grade; a pump station which pumps into the tanks; a control building that houses the electrical equipment, and an odor control system

Mayor Welsch asked whether Option One would include Olive Blvd. Mr. Calls stated Olive Blvd. is located below this site and is buffered by several properties.

Option Two - Includes the Hafner Court area and consists of 3.97 acres.

- **It** requires the acquisition of 20 residential parcels; 8 rentals; 12 owner-occupied.
- Nineteen of these homes are within the one hundred year flood plain.
- It will consist of two, 4.6 million gallon tanks; 180 foot in diameter; 35 feet above grade; a pump station which pumps into the tanks; a control building that houses the electrical equipment, and an odor control system

Mr. Alpaslan stated that three Hafner Court apartment buildings and one Westover apartment building located on the other side of the channel were also included in the U.S. Army Corps' Five Year Analysis Study.

Mr. Alpaslan asked whether Westover was included in Option One. Mr. Calls stated that it would be included in both options.

Mr. Adams informed Council that Westover is located on the east side of the Hafner Court Apartments. So although some of Hafner's buildings are located on the Westover site, they are all a part of the same complex.

Councilmember Carr questioned whether it was correct to assume that Westover would be included in Option Two? Mr. Calls informed Councilmember Carr that Westover would be included in both options.

Mr. Calls stated the Hafner Court area comprises 5.6 acres, and with the exception of one vacant parcel, the rest is owned by Hafner Court Apartments. Ninety-nine percent of this area is within the one hundred year floodplain or floodway. So the intent is to remove the apartments and following construction, restore the area to a green space.

Advantages/Disadvantages

- Option One encompasses a larger area
- Option One displaces 30 homes
- Option One requires more connecting sewers
- Option Two encompasses a smaller area
- Option Two displaces 20 homes
- Option Two decreases the length of connecting drainage because the facility would be closer to the discharge site
- Both options help to alleviate flood-prone properties

Mr. Likes stated they would like to receive Council's feedback regarding their preference of the two proposed options by the end of June. He then thanked Council for their time and opened the floor up for questions.

Councilmember Jennings stated many residents have expressed an interest in learning more about these proposals, so he would like to invite members of MSD's team to the U City Police Department's Focus Group Meeting tomorrow night at the Heman Park Community Center, at 6 p.m. He then asked if someone could provide him with information about other cities where similar storage facilities have been built. Mr. Likes stated they are currently engineering for Crestwood, the tank in St. Ann is in place now, and in addition to the facilities previously mentioned by Ms. Losli, facilities are being developed in Hazelwood and Pagedale.

Councilmember Jennings asked if MSD had reached any conclusions based on data obtained from the implementation of these other storage facilities? Mr. Lance LeComb stated based on data retrieved from two major storms in St. Ann; one prior to construction of the facility in 2011, and the second in 2013, after the tank and several other projects were completed and online, MSD has seen a 40 percent reduction in basement backups and sewer overflows. St. Louis has the fourth largest sewer system in the U.S., falling right behind New York, Chicago and L.A. So there is a lot of data on this type of work that has already been tried and proven throughout the country that MSD has been able to mimic and tailor to its own needs. Mr. LeComb assured Council that MSD would not have even considered this concept prior to seeing the value of what had been delivered in other communities in terms of environmental protection and customer service.

Councilmember Jennings asked if waste and sewer water would continue to be separated by the use of these tanks? Mr. LeComb stated MSD has two different systems; a combined sewer system that houses wastewater and stormwater and a separate system designed to only handle wastewater. However, as a result of the current capacity issues, stormwater does get into this separate system and that's what they are working to eliminate through the installation of these tanks. Councilmember Jennings asked if it was correct to assume that MSD does not have the capacity to keep waste and stormwater separate?

Mr. LeComb stated although there will still be some linkage of the two, the tanks will introduce enough capacity to eliminate separate sewer overflows; which per the Clean Water Act must be alleviated. Basement backups augment these capacity issues, so by introducing enough capacity through the implementation of this project to reduce or alleviate these sewer overflows, MSD will also reduce the number of basement backups that have occurred in this area.

Councilmember Jennings stated based on information contained within the maps, it appears as though Wellston and Forest Park would be the lowest points in the watershed and not U City. Ms. Losli stated that although these two areas could be considered the lowest points when looking at the lower right corner of the map, hydraulic models used to analyze sewer capacity have identified the strategic points where the greatest impact would be derived from the installation of these facilities. Councilmember Jennings stated the point he was trying to make was whether it would make more sense to build these facilities at the lowest points on the map which appear to be outside of U City? Mr. LeComb stated this is merely one of many storage projects taking place throughout the community. So there will be additional tanks and storage features constructed throughout the City at some of these lower spots Councilmember Jennings has identified. He stated that the proposals for U City are related to the location of MSD's trunk sewers. And while it may not be the precise lowest spot topographically, it is the area where they have experienced the most significant bottleneck. Mr. LeComb informed Councilmember Jennings that he did not believe they would be able to make tomorrow's meeting but would certainly welcome the opportunity to come back at a future meeting, or even set up a special meeting on MSD's dime and time.

Councilmember Carr stated from what she's been hearing tonight, this is really a done deal and all U City will get to do is pick the color of the dress they're going to put on? Mr. LeComb stated that U City's proposals are premised on MSD's Consent Decree with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, and the fact that MSD is a government agency. Therefore, consideration must be given to finding the lowest cost; the most effective means to achieve the right balance and these are the options that fit into those parameters. So to answer your question, yes, MSD has provided U City with two options, but at the end of the day this work needs to be completed, and engineering standards dictate that this work be accomplished in specific locations. Councilmember Carr stated she grew up near a water storage tank in Florida; they are ugly and the smell was overwhelming. Admittedly that was fifty years ago, but the fact still remains that she does not have a lot of confidence in MSD's assurances about anything. So from her perspective, what MSD is going to do is build a three-story tank in an essentially perturbed and fairly dense neighborhood. Mr. LeComb stated that while the points made are well taken, he would respectfully counter with the fact that MSD has experienced good success with the St. Ann tank, and 99 percent of the people who pass by think that it's an office building. So there is a lot that can be done with these tanks in terms of screening. Councilmember Carr noted that the two municipalities had very different characteristics; St. Ann's tank is located off of the highway in a commercial area, but U City's tanks will be located within one or two-story neighborhoods where there is no major interchange. Mr. LeComb informed Councilmember Carr that St. Ann's tank was located approximately 40 yards away from a residential neighborhood.

Councilmember Crow stated he would yield to his 3rd Ward colleagues where this is going to have the greatest impact, and simply ask a few questions. Has MSD already reached an agreement with the apartment complex regarding the acquisition of their property? Mr. LeComb stated tonight's presentation to Council has been their first step with regards to rolling out the full vision of this program, so no agreements have been made with Hafner Court. He acknowledged that there would be specific buy-out guidelines that must be followed, which mimic the Federal program in terms of being quite generous.

So typically, that yields success in negotiating a price. Councilmember Crow stated that if Council is allowed to get involved with certain aspects of this project he would request that a determination be made as to whether the tanks could be built lower than 15 feet underground, and that some type of screening be added to truly make them look like a commercial building. Because in his mind, those two factors could make a huge difference to residents living in these neighborhoods and individuals who travel down Olive. Mr. LeComb stated all of those points are well taken because the ultimate aesthetics for St. Ann's storage tanks were made in consultation with the community. So there are a number of options available and once MSD gets to the final design phase it will lend itself to other options that may not currently be on the table. In spite of the fact that there will be certain limitations, MSD does want these tanks to blend in as much as possible. So he thinks it would be fair to say that the same type of consultative process will be conducted with the community of U City.

Councilmember Smotherson stated his impression of tonight's meeting was to allow Council with an opportunity to make a recommendation on whether this project should be accepted or rejected. So he is extremely disturbed to learn that U City really has no choice in the matter. Mr. LeComb informed Councilmember Smotherson that MSD had evaluated a number of locations, as well as a number of options, all of which had challenges similar to what has been discussed at this meeting. He stated that MSD did not want to have this conversation without the ability to offer any options, and so based on all of the findings, MSD's belief is that they have presented U City with the best options available to accomplish the goals that have been established. Mr. LeComb stated there will always be challenges associated with the location of these tanks. And while he would certainly be willing to run through a couple of the other options that were evaluated and illustrate why they were more challenging, the truth of the matter is that MSD has a Consent Decree which compels them to get this work done. There is also a schedule that must be adhered to, and the fact that these are public dollars means that MSD has to bring this project in as cost-consciously as possible while being strategically effective with what needs to be accomplished within each community. So the bottom line is that from an engineering perspective, MSD does not have a lot of options simply because of the way the sewers have been laid out in this area. Councilmember Smotherson asked what MSD's schedule entailed with respect to the initiation of community engagement? Mr. Brad Nevois stated 90 days after receipt of U City's recommendation MSD will commence work with the buy-out consultant and begin contacting each individual resident. Councilmember Smotherson asked if MSD would provide residents with suggestions or recommendations for relocation that included the boundaries of U City? Mr. Nevois stated MSD follows the Uniform Relocation Act which entails interviewing residents to determine their current situation and presenting them with three options. So, although MSD can definitely present an option that allows them to remain in U City, residents are not bound by law to take that option.

He stated that their practice is to start as close as they can to their current residence, assuming there is similar stock available that meets the requirements for a decent, safe and sanitary home.

Councilmember Smotherson stated he would concur with the comments made by Councilmember Carr, in that the locations designated for U City simply cannot be compared to the locations selected for St. Ann or Crestwood. So his hope is that MSD will give the aesthetics of this project serious consideration to ensure that these tanks are at least visually appealing to those residents who will be impacted.

Councilmember Glickert agreed that based on the location these facilities should not look like industrial tanks. Nonetheless, he had noticed one facility in the PowerPoint presentation that appeared to have a window facade which he thinks would be appropriate for this area. Mr. LeComb stated that was a picture of the St. Ann facility. Councilmember Glickert asked what location or locations had been identified for Pagedale? Mr. Nevois stated two smaller tanks are being proposed for Pagedale and MSD is still in the process of working with them to determine the exact locations. Councilmember Glickert questioned whether any measures had been established to prevent a loss of power to the pump stations? Mr. Nevois stated there are one of two options; a generator to provide redundant power or the ability to phase in power from two different sources, which must be negotiated with Ameren.

Councilmember McMahon echoed the concerns of his colleagues regarding the aesthetics and questioned why this presentation had not been offered to residents since Council apparently has no decision-making authority with respect to this project? Mr. LeComb stated that MSD's protocol is to always work through the elected officials first to obtain feedback since they represent the community as a whole. Mr. Nevois stated MSD is certainly aware that the heavy lifting associated with this project falls on their shoulders. However, once these options were presented to staff, Mr. Alpaslan requested that Council be allowed to articulate their desires since they knew the community better than MSD and could recommend how to implement this project in a way to ensure that it represented the best possible fit for the City.

Mayor Welsch asked if MSD could provide Mr. Alpaslan with answers to the following questions:

1. How far will the tanks be located away from homes that remain in this area?
2. What kind of expansive landscaping will be provided between the tanks and neighboring residents?
3. Is there any sound associated with the operation of these tanks?
4. Can the 40 percent reduction rate for basement backups be enhanced if the tanks were designed to be larger?

Mr. LeComb stated 40 percent was merely an example of the success realized based on comparisons made with two storms at the beginning of this project, and prior to the completion of all of their work in St. Ann. He stated MSD is dealing with an area in U City which consists of separate sewer overflows. So enough improvements have to be made to the system to eliminate these separate sewer overflows.

Pursuant to questions raised by Mayor Welsch and Councilmember Jennings, Mr. LeComb noted that the size of these tanks was not an option. So in lieu of their suggestions, he would put together a sample of options that are available and provide them for Council's review.

Councilmember Carr asked whether eminent domain would be used in the acquisition of properties? Mr. Nevois stated typically, MSD has been very successful in reaching mutual agreements. However, they also understand that in order to build a public project there will be times when all of the property owners may not be willing to reach an agreement. But eminent domain is only utilized as a last resort.

In closing, Mr. LeComb stated that while all of the points made this evening were well taken, he would ask Council to remember that the intended purpose of this project is to take sewage out of the environment and the basements of U City residents. He then thanked Council for tonight's opportunity and advised them that any information requested would be provided to staff as quickly as possible.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no additional questions or comments, Mayor Welsch adjourned the Study Session at 6:26 p.m.

Larette Reese
Interim City Clerk

