

Concord Twp. officials tally homes hit by storm

Simon Husted

SHusted@news-herald.com
Twitter: @SimonSaysNH

Like other communities in western and central Lake County, more than 50 homes in Concord Township reported flash flooding since July 20, when 6 inches of rain fell over six hours.

Unlike many of those communities, however, the homes in Concord flooded for various reasons, many of which didn't involve sanitary sewer backup.

"As an example, Jordan Creek had breached Concord-Hambden Road and was flowing like a torrent requiring the Fire Department to close the road at that location," Concord Service Director Frank Kraska told trustees during their meeting Wednesday. He said the flood surged at least 8 feet higher than normal stream levels.

Kraska said the township is still learning of more homeowners affected by the storm.

Amanda Darling and her neighbor, Gina Bertone, live along Jordan Creek and found 2½ to 4 feet of creek water inside their basements the morning of July 20. Living in a flood zone, it's a problem that persists for the two families and a third neighbor.

It's also a problem that is steadily getting worse.

Bertone said water has penetrated her basement four times in the last five years she has owned her home at 11854 Concord-Hambden Road. Her mother-in-law lived there for 40 years and was only flooded twice.

"To go twice in 40 years to four times in five years, there's obviously an issue and there's something going on there," Bertone told trustees.

Darling, who lives at 11864 Concord-Hambden Road, said she thinks the steady housing development upstream is causing more stormwater to be

times faster than anyone else," Darling said.

On July 20, Darling's backyard was swamped with 4½ feet of water. She lost a camper, dirt bike and her son's Honda Civic.

Both women asked trustees why no progress has been made on resolving the problem. Bertone suggested dredging the creek so it can hold more water, and Darling suggested the government buying her property and that of her neighbor because they cannot sell them.

Trustee Chris Galloway said such projects are beyond the township's capabilities and require funding from the state or federal government.

"We have tried to find avenues for this property and other properties in the township, but we have limitations on what we are allowed to do as a township. That's why we look to the county," Galloway said.

The project needs grant funding, but the township cannot apply for those grants, Galloway said.

"This isn't the only type of situation we deal with that takes forever (getting) resolved

at a state or federal level," Galloway said. "We deal with this on so many things. We're building a road up on (Route) 44, and we're eight years into it."

Galloway and Concord Legal Counsel Michael Lucas said they are limited on what they can discuss about the flooding incidents on Concord-Hambden Road because they're facing a lawsuit from Darling. That case, which includes Lake County and Ohio Department of Natural Resources as defendants, was dismissed by a U.S. District Court judge in Cleveland, but is being appealed in the 6th District Circuit Court.

Bertone said she appreciated Trustee Paul Malchesky visiting her home soon after the storm subsided to inspect damage, but is frustrated because nothing has changed.

"We don't expect it (to be) done with the snap of our fingers, but this has been going on since 2006 so it has been seven years now — to the point where the situation is so extreme that we're told to walk away because we don't have any other option," Bertone said.