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RH calls for flooding forum

Village asks Lake County for answers on long-term sewer water backups

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As communities across Northeast Ohio return to normalcy after the July 20 flash flood, residents in Fairport Harbor continue battling new sewer water backups.

And, they are pressuring county officials for answers.

Residents like Niles Oimonen at 406 East St. said he's watched the problem persist for him and others on his street in the last 12 years.

"Almost every time it rains, I get some water in my basement, backed up from my sewer," Oimonen said, adding that he's now engineered the sewer backflow to run above his basement into a sump pump.

He said he often speaks with vil-

lage officials, which owns the storm-water pipes, and he's even joined the village's six-member flood committee formed this month.

Oimonen said he would like to hear more questions answered on a plan to resolve the village's sewer backup issues from Lake County, which owns the sanitary pipes in the village.

Oimonen and other residents might



Simon Husted

meeting like this already should have happened.

"With all of the flooding we've had and with all of the asking we've done, I still haven't seen a representative from Department of Utilities in front of these people. They deserve it," he said.

Richard Martin, director of the Lake County Department of Utilities, said it has been a few years since the department sent a representative to a meeting like this already should have happened.

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Fairport Harbor Village Council meeting.

Martin said his department has turned its scope more closely to individual homeowner associations and local governments since Friday when Lake County commissioners lifted its local Declaration of Emergency.

Martin said he is more interested in meeting with

Fairport Harbor's flood committee than attending the public forum.

"We typically find that a lot more happens when we meet with a committee and they tell us what's happening in their village," Martin said, adding that such committees representatives can group affected homes together and provide a larger sense of context.

Information like that, Martin said, can help his department locate leaks or cross connections between sanitary pipes and stormwater pipes, which is the cause to why water backs up into basements.

Fairport Harbor was built in the early 1900s with a combined sewer and storm-water pipe system, long

before EPA banned such designs, Randy Rothlisberger, director of water for the utilities department, said employees have been out searching for leaks and connections every time it rains. Rothlisberger said he had no estimate available, but there could be up to hundreds still existing.

The Fairport Harbor flood

committee sent Lake County commissioners a letter Aug. 12, asking if a public forum could be scheduled for late August or in September. The letter asked the commissioners to invite any official they deem necessary for the public forum.

Mayor Tim Mamross said he expects a public forum to be scheduled sometime in the



Tim Mamross

first week of September. "The county has been trying to address this and so has the village," Martin said of Fairport Harbor's sewer back-up problems. "We need to re-initiate those efforts."