

Watershed forum 3.24.09

My name is Barbara Sharkey. I live in Sheridan Beach in Lake Forest Park. Our house is the first one moving away from the creek that doesn't flood, but we have experienced six inches of backed-up sewage through our entire downstairs in both the '96/97 and '07 storms. I am speaking for myself, although I am a new board member of the neighborhood association, responsible for, ironically enough, personal safety, fire and . . . . sewage.

I understand why some of you would object to the Lyon Creek improvements being included in Tech Memo 2, and also why our Mayor Dave would object so strenuously to your objections as he tries to represent his flooded constituents, who are a fairly cranky group about the state of things fifteen months out from one storm and over twelve years out from the other. It's hard for me to convey the frustration of having a beautiful little stream so small you can practically jump across it most of the time, causing so much damage to 30-40 homes at the drop of a hat. The anxiety in the neighborhood this past winter was really unbearable. Every time "heavy rains" were in the forecast, most of us were out with our flashlights checking the stream constantly and feeling sick at our stomachs. You didn't know whether to go move everything up out of the basement and grab the sandbags at the end of the street or not.

From my perspective, Otak's attribution of 20-30% of the flood coming from McAleer is probably about right and still offers some hope to us. Reducing flood levels by that much would have to help, and could be the difference for several homes. So Lake Forest Park needs to continue to be a cooperative partner in the Ballinger/McAleer Watershed Forum. The solutions are not just going to be at the top at Lake Ballinger and

at the bottom at the mall, but in incremental changes in water strategies all along the watershed path . . . even if we can't put in those 34,000 rain barrel systems.

However, I would ask our upstream neighbors for compassion and understanding of our predicament, and the inclusion of some Lyon solutions, specifically the culverts at the mall. If you took the walking tour last month, think of the fire station at the edge of the mall. Literally: at their back/side door, behind the fence and the four foot tall wall of sandbags, they have Lyon Creek. At their front door, just across the road, they have McAleer. When the firefighters came back from one of their calls during the early morning hours of Dec. 3, they discovered the station was flooding. And this wasn't a Moses and the Red Sea event with a dry path between two rivers of water, one marked McAleer and the other marked Lyon. Our area is in the basin of two overlapping watersheds and I don't know how someone can definitively take a can of spray paint and say, this is the line between them.

Accordingly, I would ask that Figure 2-9 on p. 22 be redrawn to more accurately convey the stream paths. As it is, it makes it look like at the fire station, the distance between the two is the same as it is where they exit into Lake Washington. In fact, I think they're about 100 yards apart by the station, and probably .2 or 3. of a mile apart on the lake shore. Although it is just a schematic, the figure perpetuates the idea that these are two distinctly different systems.

The tech memo is a great start and I learned a lot from it. Now when my neighbors ask, "Can't they just lower Ballinger by half a foot in the winter?" I can say, "Sure, when would you like the 35 million gallons of water to start flowing through your back yard?"

Let's keep working together to get the job done right and completely, from top to bottom and sideways and all parts in between.