

Item 24-1444: Approve single-source award of 2024D Contract for Northland Creek and Bellaire Watersheds Stormwater Evaluation to Brown and Caldwell in an amount not to exceed \$301,200.00

Common Council

Wed, Nov 20, 2024 7:00PM

Mayor Jake Woodford 11:00

I have no business to present to you this evening, so we'll move on now to public participation. At each meeting, the Common Council reserves 30 minutes for members of the public to express their views on items which appear on our agenda. This evening, we have about a half a dozen who made the sign-up sheet, but if you didn't get the sign-up sheet, don't worry, we'll make sure that everybody who like to speak has an opportunity, so long as if we need to the council extends discussion. When I call your name, please approach the microphone and state your name and address for the record. We ask that you please keep your comments concise and to the point, and that you take into consideration comments that have been made by those who've spoken before you. And we also ask that you limit your comments to five minutes or less per speaker. We'll be keeping track of time and reminding you as your as your time nears expiration. We also ask that you address your comments to the chair so not to individual members either of the body, staff, or other folks who are here in the room. We'd also—I'd also remind you that public participation will not be a dialog between members of the Council or myself and you. This is your opportunity to address the council. So, with that, we'll get started with public participation. We'll start with the sign-up sheet, and, again, I'll make sure that anybody who didn't have an opportunity to sign up on the sheet still has a chance if they'd like to. So, the first is **[Lisa C.]**.

Lisa C. (Resident) 12:37

Hi. Can you hear me okay? Hi. My name is **[Lisa C.]**, and I live at **[XXXXX]** East Pershing Street. Our house is located between North Viola Street and Lilian Court. I want to begin by saying I appreciate the council looking into the storm water evaluation for a water shed in District 14, the Northland Creek watershed.

Lisa C. (Resident) 12:57

On July 5 and July 13, there were two storms a week apart, and our street flooded both times. The flooding in our neighborhood was a disaster. This is nothing new on Pershing Street. Our street floods at least twice a year. Every year, it seems to get worse, and now Viola street was affected. We moved here in June of 2001 and have videos and pictures documenting the flooding over the years.

Lisa C. (Resident) 13:20

In prior years, we have met with and talk to city employees, project engineers, and the Director of Public Works. Employees we had talked to were Paula Vandehay, Sue Olson, and Pete Neuberger, to name a few. It was acknowledged that our area is low and prone to water ponding in our street and that sewer systems built before 2004 are not designed to handle intense rain events.

Lisa C. (Resident) 13:44

Since the problem is well known and documented, why isn't this being fixed? In July 2013 a study was done, and the results said that it would cost around \$16 million to fix the instruct infrastructure in our area. It was voted down by the City Council because it was too expensive. The infrastructure is inadequate. The sewer drainage pipes are too small, and the water basin, or wherever the drainage water goes, is too small, too slow. The street always takes hours to go down after the rain has stopped.

Lisa C. (Resident) 14:16

I'm frustrated. We've talked to the city multiple times in the past. Every year the flooding gets worse. I'm tired of throwing things out. I'm tired of spending money on cleanup. I'm tired of trying to improve my property with grading and updates, only to have it not work because the flooding in our area is not being taken care of. If it's expensive for the city, just imagine how expensive it is for us. The city's poor drainage system in District 14 has turned into our neighborhoods problem for far too long. I hope that the study will be approved. I also hope that when the study is done and all options have been looked at, a solution to fix the problem will be approved and done sooner rather than later. We've been waiting too long already. Thank you for your time and for listening.

Mayor Jake Woodford 15:04

Thank you. Next is James bear.

Jim B. (Resident) 15:18

Hi, I'm [James B.]. I have a business at 3800—excuse me, 1800 Northland Avenue about a mile down the road from Viola group that got devastated with their flood. I'm on the north side. The backside of my business is Memorial Park, and on east side of the business is Memorial Park.

Jim B. (Resident) 15:49

On July 5—I'm a little nervous. I never spoke to these many people at a time, so if I stumble, please accept my apologies. But on July 5 the storm went through, and behind my building and my property, there's a berm, and I have two six-inch drain pipes that go out into the stream that runs behind it. Uh, quite a few years ago you redid Memorial Park, put in some holding ponds, and all the water that came out of the park and from, I believe this northwood section back in there from Mead street, that all came through there. I never—I built the place 55 years ago, and I never had any water damage or flooding whatsoever until the contractor came in and re-landscaped Memorial Park. When they did that, they severed my two drains which they were informed that they were there, but they never reattached them. So, when the storm came in, the mayor was there too with the fire department, and they spent about two to three hours pumping the water out of the basement and my parking lot, which holds about 10-11 cars.

Jim B. (Resident) 17:33

And I called numerous amount of times. One was public works. The other one was engineering department. And they contacted me and said they'd be back the next day. They never showed up the next day. So, I called them, and they said it was too wet back there. They couldn't go back there and evaluate the situation. Same day, the park and rec department, which is directly behind my building over on Northland—they're down by Burger King and that in that vicinity—they were back there, and they were able to mow the lawn, but the engineering department couldn't come back there. Well, I waited about two weeks, called him again, and they told me, whenever they could get around to it. That was the answer I got. You know, that's three and a half months ago, and they never got around to it. So, I don't know what kind of city workers we have, but it's disenchanting, you know. It just—I don't know, they never showed up, and I haven't heard anything since from anybody what's going on.

Jim B. (Resident) 18:53

To this date, I've got over \$200,000 worth of damage, because that was my business, had over \$100,000 worth of paper in the lower level. They had three feet of water and they're damaged all that paper. And I had about five different machines down there, and all the electronics, motors, boards, everything was shot. My furnace, which is an \$8,000 furnace, gotta be replaced. The water came in there so fast it was like a tsunami. It just poured—it forced my garage door in that I got there, and I gotta replace that. Yeah, so I guess that's about all I got to say, and I appreciate your listening to me. Okay, thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 19:45

Thank you. Next is [Rachel P.].

Rachel P. (Resident) 19:55

[...] before my time starts?

Mayor Jake Woodford 19:57

Oh, yeah, go ahead. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 20:15

Unfortunately, I didn't make enough copies. You'll have to share with your neighbors. My name is [Rachel P.]. [XXXXXX] North Viola Street. Thank you for your time this evening. My husband and I live at [XXXXXX] North Viola Street. I was born and raised in the Fox Valley and went to school in Appleton so like many, I consider Appleton my home.

Rachel P. (Resident) 20:38

What my husband and I experienced was tragic but entirely preventable. It is not unique only to us. Our neighborhood is a diverse microchasm, and each res—each resident has been burdened by this ongoing issue in their own way. As I share my story, I implore you, please do not mistake my passion to protect district 14 for indignity or scapegoating. The physical, financial, and emotional damage caused by this incident was preventable. This is not a 100-year storm. I believe the council is on the right track with this study, and should continue prioritizing meaningful action.

Rachel P. (Resident) 21:11

On the afternoon of July 5, 2024 Appleton experienced flash flooding with water rising to waste levels and above on Viola street between Pershing and Service Road. At the time of the flooding event, my husband and I had only been living in our home for 11 months. We are first time homeowners. It had been raining all morning, but when the rain picked up, our storm and sanitary sewers couldn't keep up. I heard a loud crack, and then water rushing into the basement. The flood waters breached our foundation, creating two car-door-sized holes, and 80,000 gallons of water filled our basement in five minutes. Ultimately, we had seven feet of water and four inches of mud in our basement. I grabbed our vital documents, our cat Raja, our wedding vows, and waded through knee deep water to the neighbor's house. After about 30 minutes, our little family was evacuated by boat by the Appleton Fire Department.

Rachel P. (Resident) 22:05

An hour or so after being evacuated, my husband and I returned to Viola Street to watch the relief efforts and check the damage to our neighborhood. When we arrived, I watched as city employees cleared drains and open manhole covers. Within an hour of the crew working on the storm and sanitary sewers, the water that was waist high was completely gone. Keep in mind, some of that water went into the sanitary system and flowed out of my neighbor's toilets into their basements, causing significant damage.

Rachel P. (Resident) 22:33

At first, I was relieved when I saw the water was gone, but then I asked myself, "If it was so simple for the city to clean the storm and sanitary sewers, why wasn't it maintained?"

Rachel P. (Resident) 22:43

We proceeded to spend the next month displaced from our home, working tirelessly to rebuild and repurchase all that was lost. Like too many on our street, we rebuilt our foundation, redid our electrical replace our HVAC, hot water heater, washer, dryer and so much more. Our total cost will likely reach \$80,000. Of course, none of that is covered by insurance.

Rachel P. (Resident) 23:04

This is not new to our neighborhood. The city has previously acknowledged the storm water is a recurring issue and will persist, if not addressed. If they are present today, I encourage those neighbors to share their story with the Council, as you have with our alderman.

Rachel P. (Resident) 23:17

A similar study conducted by the city of Appleton revealed the current storm water systems are not sufficient for levels of rainfall associated with even a 25-year storm, much less a 100-year storm. I understand the previous study suggested a solution that was financially unrealistic for the city; however, if left unresolved, the city is choosing to allow this private nuisance to exist. That is simply unacceptable.

Rachel P. (Resident) 23:43

While the damage of flooding is obvious risk to public safety, health hazards from water born issues, and mold from excess moisture, the personal hardship it creates is easy to ignore if you are not speaking to impacted individuals directly. On our block alone, we have multi-generational families, retired teachers, new parents, and immigrants, the financial blow of rebuilding will sting for years to come. We are not Appleton's most wealthy, but we are Appleton's most determined.

Rachel P. (Resident) 24:13

I urge the council to vote yes to fund this study and comprehensive storm water management solutions expeditiously, as delay only increases risk. We already know when the next flooding event is going to happen. We have 25 years on the clock. You have the power to make meaningful difference by investing in preventative infrastructure that will protect homes, families, and the community you represent. Thank you again for your time and for considering the voices of homeowners impacted by these preventable issues. I trust the city of Appleton will do the right thing and demonstrate their commitment to residents' safety, property, and well-being. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 24:53

Next is Dexter Peterson.

Dexter P. (Resident) 25:01

Uh, hello. My name is **[Dexter P.]**. I live at 2701 North Viola Street. I'm here to read a letter from my neighbor, **[Skip P.]**. He lives at **[XXXXX]** North Viola Street and wasn't able to be here, so I'll read his letter.

Dexter P. (Resident) 25:16

"I am **[Skip P.]**, my wife Sue and I live at **[XXXXX]** North Viola Street, and have been resident at that address for more than 50 years. Up until July 5 of this year, Sue and I never feared or became emotional when we heard the words from meteorologist saying, 'neighborhood and urban flooding is probable and can be expected' or 'significant rainfall is expected to be heavy and could exceed several inches' or other similar alert dialogs with warnings of this kind, but we do now every single time. We are reminded of the fire department and other first responders telling us that we have five minutes to pack up whatever we need, and then helping us onto the

rubber inflatable raft to get to higher ground and leaving behind a basement full of murky water with their possessions floating and sinking all around us as we scramble to pack.

Dexter P. (Resident) 26:08

Sue and I can truly understand and emp—and empathize with others across our nation who face similar and even worse scenarios and ours. This is a traumatic experience and is not easily forgotten or dismissed. You have the—you have the opportunity tonight to not only help those affected on Viola Street but even your neighborhood as well. Please approve the funds needed to evaluate what can be done to eliminate or reduce the risk of this kind of disaster from occurring again. Thank you."

Mayor Jake Woodford 26:45

Next is Mary peoples.

Mary P. (Resident) 26:56

Hello, I'm [Mary P.]. My family lives at [XXXXXX] North Viola. Last week a lot of people heard the individual stories, and I think that's an interesting part of this is that we all have our individual circumstance. What we have in common is that it was a terrible hardship for all of us, financially, emotionally, just in every way really.

Mary P. (Resident) 27:21

My family's story is that we moved into our home in 2019. We finished our entire basement because we do adult foster care for a gentleman named Brad. And so, our basement was completely finished, and so our house was among the houses that didn't flood because of the rain water but because when the manhole covers were removed, we had a sewage backup. It was spontaneous. We had been watching it. There was no mistaking about it.

Mary P. (Resident) 27:56

The sewage water went into every room. We were lucky in that, I'd say we had about a foot and a half, as opposed to some people who had just, you know, nine feet of water. But with sewage water, everything it touches, you have to get rid of. So, we lost everything that was in our basement, all the furniture. One of my adult children had—was in between moves. We had moved all her furniture home, lost it all. In addition to that, we had to remove flooring, dry wall, doors. We had to take a bathroom down to the studs, where one of the sewage backups was through the shower. So, I could go on about those details, but I think you get the idea. Pretty expensive and pretty destructive.

Mary P. (Resident) 28:49

It really took us months to get everything repaired, and not because we dragged our feet at all. You know, it's hard to find contractors. It had to be done. It not only had to be done well, but I felt like it had to be done, maybe even above and beyond, because this event got a lot of press. So I think someday when we go to sell our house, people going to be like, "Oh, Viola Street. What did you do to fix this? Or what did you do to fix your house?"

Mary P. (Resident) 29:18

So, all that time, our gentleman, Brad, was displaced. We had to make makeshift rooms upstairs for him, and it was really a hardship for him. It was really devastating the day he went into the basement and said, "Where's my bed? Where's my dresser? Where's my stuff? Where are my clothes?" Hard to understand.

Mary P. (Resident) 29:45

So just a sense of feeling of helplessness was kind of unbelievable, and I understand the city's take of you know you were not able to speak because legalities were raised and lawyers were, you know, suggesting that we not talk about, you know, whose fault things were. But I think people can show that they care and can give support without, you know, lean—laying claim to blame. And I really feel like that was missing, and I felt like the silence was pretty deafening right after this event. But the neighbors really relied on each other. As Rachel mentioned, we have tremendous diversity in our neighborhood, which is wonderful—religiously, politically age, racially. If there's one good thing that came out of this, it's that we all know each other now, and we all helped each other, and clearly we're not going away.

Mary P. (Resident) 30:46

So, I'm glad for this study. I hope that the study focuses on what can be done as opposed to if there's a problem, because the problem is already clearly obvious. Thank you very much for your time.

Mayor Jake Woodford 31:07

Next is [Tracy H.].

Mayor Jake Woodford 31:14

Jim, does she need some help? Is she doing okay? Does she need some help? Yeah. Jeremy? Sorry about that.

Tracy H. (Resident) 31:27

Okay, so my name is [Tracy H.]. District 14, [XXXXX] North Viola Street. Just for a little context before I start speaking, this is my house and my basement. That's my nine feet of water it was at the top. So, thank you for letting me speak. I want to just tell my story a little bit.

Tracy H. (Resident) 31:51

On July 5, rain water collected in our street, fill their driveway, and then broke our basement windows in. It filled our basement with nine feet of water, caving in the ceiling. It left water in our gas line. It picked up our full washing machine and moved it to the other side of the basement. It filled our HVAC system. We had to drill holes in the HVAC system to drain the water out. It came onto the first floor. It ruined our furnace, our water heater. We had to have chemical asbestos abatement because the flooring started to peel. It's—it was more than \$60,000 in damage. Our basement was also partially finished, and it resulted in two full construction sized dumpsters of our possessions, things that I had worked for a really long time.

Tracy H. (Resident) 32:44

What's more, our two-year-old son was home when this happens. And if your two-year-old son is home while your basement is flooding, you put him on the second floor, and you put him to bed, and you collect your stuff and wait for the fire department to come and get you. The first time it rained after the storm, his chest hammered, and he looked at me, and he said, "You're safe. You're safe, Mom."

Tracy H. (Resident) 33:11

We weren't able to live in our home for a full week after that, and even that was kind of pushing it. We haven't been able to replace the stairwell going down into the basement because that had to be removed. The lighting was hanging, so we just used cables to get it back on the ceiling. So, we still need to replace that. We haven't been able to do drywall. Obviously, our windows are still broken and our windows are boarded up. Our basement is not safe enough for my son to be in. If I open the door, he says "Dangerous," and points down there. There's a hole in the dry wall that looks down into the basement, so you can see it at all times.

Tracy H. (Resident) 33:50

Many of my friends and family assumed that our homeowners insurance would cover this type of events, but it doesn't. Homeowners insurance doesn't often—isn't offering this kind of insurance because we don't live in a flood plain. This kind of damage was created by a human system that does not meet the current weather needs of our neighborhood.

Tracy H. (Resident) 34:13

In an earlier study, it was known that there was a problem in this area or Appleton. We received a drain in our backyard at some point before we moved in. I just want you to know that during this storm, that drain did nothing. It was covered in water, and the water could not drain through it, because there was nowhere for it to go.

Tracy H. (Resident) 34:34

We're looking for an adequate solution to this problem this time, a real solution, not just something that looks good. I understand the concern about costs like many of my neighbors. I understand the worry about raising storm water rates. But not addressing this problem costed me and my neighbors. We carry the burden of that refusal to raise rates or address the problem disproportionately—financially and emotionally. I'm speaking today to reiterate my hope that you'll remember the cost of inaction, be an advocate for the well-being of our neighborhood. Vote for the study, sure, but then do something with that finding or those findings, and do something that will create meaningful change in our lives. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 35:26

That's, that's the end of the list of folks who signed up. Are there others who'd like to speak? And if, if, if you would just raise your hand, because I want to, I want to get a motion from council to extend just if we have anybody else who would like to speak on this item or another item that appears on the agenda. Anybody else? Okay, hearing none, then we'll close public participation. And move on. We have no public hearings, no special resolutions, so we'll establish the order of the day. Alder Croatt.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 36:06

Thank you, Mayor. Please separate item from utilities, 24-1444, which is the referenced contract for Northland Creek and Bellaire watershed storm water evaluation to Brown and Caldwell.

Mayor Jake Woodford 36:29

Okay. Any others? All right. Hearing none, we'll take up the item from utilities committee. This is item 24-1444 approve single source award of 2024D contract for Northland Creek and Bellaire watershed storm water evaluation to Brown and Caldwell in an amount not to exceed \$301,200. We have a motion and a second to approve open the floor for discussion. Alder Croatt.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 37:12

Thank you, Mayor. A few things I want to mention here and say, but I want to start by thanking the citizens for coming out and sharing their stories. These were obviously very devastating and traumatic events that took place in July. There was actually two within about eight days of each other, the first one being the most impactful, causing the most damage. So, thank you for sharing your stories and coming to Utilities committee meeting and to this meeting and letting the council hear your—the impact of those events.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 37:47

Also thank you to the mayor and your staff for bringing this forward now versus waiting until 2025. I'm thankful that we have money in the budget for—to do this, to start this process now and look forward to getting the data from the results of the evaluation that's going to take place.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 38:06

Obviously, at some point, you know, the tougher decisions—I think everyone's on board with this, you know, awarding this contract. Down the road, there's going to be tougher decisions that will need to be made in regards to possible solutions. As everyone can imagine, none of these solutions are inexpensive. They're typically very, very expensive—in the millions and millions of dollars. So, we'll really need to look hard at the—at those, at those results and the options that we are presented with, and then look for solutions for this neighborhood and the entire watershed and everything that's being evaluated.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 38:45

Really, the only question I have, and it's a clarification for the citizens that are here tonight, is, if we could just get maybe Director Jungwirth to give kind of an estimate as to the timeline of events on something like this. Like, how long does it typically take for an evaluation to come together after initial modeling and things take place?

Mayor Jake Woodford 39:08

Director Jungwirth, which microphone is that? Okay. Go ahead.

Director Laura Jungwirth (Public Works) 39:15

As you know, we intend to initiate our kickoff meeting yet, hopefully in December of 2024 utilizing some 2024 funds. With that said, it's difficult to pinpoint an exact time frame. It's going to take months to assemble, pulling from historical data that we have, flood data, and then building those models and then also coming up with viable alternatives. We want to make sure we provide our due diligence in it, and come up with, like I said, viable solutions. So, we anticipate many months before that will come back for approval.

Director Laura Jungwirth (Public Works) 40:00

With that said, our Deputy Director of Engineering and I have had conversations about the possibility of, as some alternatives come up, that in the interim, before maybe the full study is completed, that we could have those conversations at that point, if it makes sense to, to try and start tackling maybe some smaller scale projects.

Director Laura Jungwirth (Public Works) 40:22

So, we also have other items that we're working on in the interim, maybe not a full-scale tackle, but things such as changing out yard drains, upsizing storm sewer pipes, that we will continue making progress on. So, we're not halting citywide progress as we work on this. We're going to be working on a multitude of relief projects in conjunction with it.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 40:47

Great. Thank you. I appreciate that information and the desire to get you know a detailed report and a lot of options and looking at some of those options along the way. But if there is any way to expedite the process, I would certainly advocate for that. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 41:07

Further discussion. Hearing none, we have a motion and a second to approve. Please cast your votes. The motion passes 14 zero. The item has been approved.