



Engineering Department  
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City Engineer

To: Infrastructure Committee  
From: Engineering Department  
Date: December 9, 2014  
Re: Future Upgrades of Private Sanitary and Stormwater Connections to City Owned Systems

Residences and businesses in the City are connected to the City's sewer system by private sewer laterals. A private lateral is the pipe running from the building's plumbing system to the City's sanitary sewer main. According to the City Code, private sewer laterals are the responsibility of the resident or business from the building to, and including, the connection to the sanitary sewer main.

As you are aware, the City is in the process of negotiating a consent decree with the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) dealing with sewer and stormwater issues. As part of this consent decree, EPA and DEP are requiring the City to reduce the amount of stormwater inflow and infiltration that is entering the City's system from these private services. In order to accomplish this, these private laterals will need to be inspected and, in some cases, repaired or upgraded. In many cases in which a sanitary upgrade connection is required, a foundation drain connection to the storm water system may be required as well.

One approach to meeting this federal and state mandate would be for the City to require residents and businesses to inspect their private laterals and make any repairs or improvements necessary by a certain date. This, however, could be a very significant expense for which property owners have not budgeted.

A second option would be to have the City pay for inspections and improvements. This would require significant funding in the form of a sewer fee or tax increase, which would affect all sewer users or taxpayers, respectively. It would also, in effect, mean that property owners who have kept their systems in good condition would have to pay for repairs to the faulty laterals of others.

A third option would be to require private laterals to be inspected and, if necessary, repaired or improved to meet standards when there is a change in ownership of the property the lateral serves. Communities elsewhere in the nation have adopted this approach, and at least one Maine

community, Rockland, is considering it. This approach may prove less objectionable to property owners than forcing them to complete this work on an arbitrary time table.

Of course, if a sewer or stormwater project is occurring along a street where updated connections are required, the property owner may have an opportunity to have this work completed at the same time, at their expense but likely at a reduced cost.

The Engineering and Sewer Departments wish to receive input from the Infrastructure Committee on a direction to pursue with regards to future required upgrades to private service lines that connect to the City's system.