



Halifax Regional Water Commission

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March 29, 2012

North West Community Council
c/o Office of the Municipal Clerk
PO Box 1749, Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

Attention: Chair and Members of the North West Community Council

Re: Rain Event of Tuesday, August 2, 2011 and the Property at 327 Lakeview Avenue

Halifax Water is writing with respect to a motion tabled at the North West Community Council (NWCC) meeting of August 11, 2011. The extract from the NWCC minutes is as follows:

12.1 Councillor Johns - Rain event of Tuesday, August 2, 2011 and the property at 327 Lakeview Avenue

Councillor Johns provided an update respecting a concern raised during a recent power outage at the property of 327 Lakeview Avenue. It was noted that Springfield Lake is serviced by an independent sewage treatment plan, which is fed by a variety of different pumping stations to the plant. During high weather events, in particular during power outages, sewage can backup into the basements of nearby homes. On Tuesday, August 2, 2011 there was a power outage around 8 p.m., and at approximately 11:30 p.m. sewage backed up into the basement at 327 Lakeview Avenue. Councillor Johns indicated that an investigation is being undertaken by Halifax Water. The property is presently being rented and the owner currently resides in Ontario. Councillor Johns asked what Halifax Water is doing to ensure that this issue does not reoccur and questioned whether there is any liability.

The Community Council agreed to forward this matter to HRM staff for review and add it to the status sheet for future update.

Councillor Outhit suggested the possibility of Halifax Water installing an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) system at the pumping station.

As indicated in the minutes above, it is possible for sewage to back up into the basements of homes during power outages during heavy rainfall events. To preclude this from occurring, Halifax Water has a program of pumping down pumping station wet wells at Springfield Lake during heavy rainfall events and during power outages, to reduce the opportunity for sewage

backups and sewage overflows. Halifax Water also uses portable generators during power outages so that the operation of certain pumping stations can be continued during these events.

These measures have proven to be quite successful during the years that they have been in place. However, there are situations when these measures cannot keep up. The evening of August 2, 2011 was one of those. Staff was on the site prior to 1130 pm that night and had the system under control. Unfortunately, a lightning strike knocked out the power in Springfield Lake at around 1130 pm, and staff was unable to work at the pumping station located near 327 Lakeview Avenue for a period of time due to extreme lightning in the area. The situation was further complicated in that for a portion of the power outage, only one phase of the three phase power was out, which resulted in loss of power at the wastewater stations but left power on in the homes. Because the sewer pumps in the homes were still functioning, some portions of the system filled quickly and were surcharged for a period of time.

Halifax Water staff have received very few recent reports of sewage in basements in the Springfield Lake area. Halifax Water feels that that is a result of staff efforts related to the programs described above, plus the use of sewage backwater valves by residents in the area.

Halifax Water staff have previously recommended verbally to the resident of 327 Lakeview Avenue that he should confirm that the building service connection and/or the plumbing has a properly functioning sewage backwater valve, and if it does not, that the backwater valve be repaired, or a new one installed, as required. Halifax Water will write the resident and the property owner to document our advice.

Halifax Water uses Uninterruptible Power Supply systems at many of our pumping stations to provide backup power to our communications systems at those pumping stations. We do not use Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) systems to provide power for the pumps themselves because of the relatively large power requirements. Instead, at Springfield Lake, we use the wet well pump down program and portable generators. It is further noted that additional investments in emergency power equipment will be considered within the annual capital budget process.

We trust that this information is helpful. If further information is required, please contact the undersigned.

Sincerely,



John Sheppard, P.Eng

Director of Environmental Services, Halifax Water

cc: Carl Yates, M.A.Sc., P. Eng, General Manager, Halifax Water