



Mishawaka Communicator



Working together to build the "Best Hometown in America" by delivering exceptional services, promoting safe and clean neighborhoods, elevating the quality of life and inspiring pride in our community.

Dave Wood, Mayor

www.mishawaka.in.gov

January 2018

A Letter from Mayor Dave Wood



MY TOP PRIORITY!

As I write this letter in the midst of the Christmas season with white out, snowy conditions right outside my window and the hustle and bustle of the holidays all around, I am sure wastewater is the last thing on your mind—as it should be. But for me, it has become a top priority. While it's not the most exciting subject to write about or read (our Wastewater Division Manager, Karl Kopec might disagree), it is a topic that has major implications for the City and for each resident's pocket book. My ultimate goal is to save the City and our rate payers

millions of dollars. Do I have your attention now? If so, I would encourage you to slog on reading the letter.

First the history: I have written in the past about our City's obligation and unfunded mandate from the Federal Government to eliminate wet weather discharges from our combined sewers into the St Joseph River. That sounds like a perfectly reasonable request; after all, we all want to be good stewards of the environment. The issue is how our City's combined sewer system was designed many decades ago, long before many of us were here. All sewer pipes, both sanitary and storm, combined underground eventually made their way to the river. Over time, these pipes were intercepted and diverted to our wastewater treatment plant, where wastewater could be treated effectively. However, on rainy days and following major snow melts, the plant couldn't handle the full peak volume, so overflow structures diverted the excess combined sewage and storm water into the river through combined sewer overflows [CSOs]. This happened many times in a year, depending on the magnitude of the storm events the City experienced. Although recreational use was likely rare during severe wet weather, the river was not very clean, safe, healthy, or inviting during these overflow events.

The Federal Government stepped in and passed the Clean Water Act amendments in 1972 to ensure the long-term health and viability of our greatest natural resources: the lakes, rivers, streams, and tributaries that are a vital part of nearly every community. The result was that many older CSO communities (there are 103 of them in Indiana alone), had to develop plans to stop discharging combined sewage and storm water into the river. Sounds perfectly reasonable. What actually happened was a government overreaction to the decades of under-reaction; the United States Environmental Protection Agency [USEPA] stepped in and mandated that Mishawaka and the other CSO communities develop plans to vastly reduce sewage overflows with a heavy-handed

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Know Your Numbers, Lower Your Blood Pressure

Health Information from Saint Joseph Health System

High blood pressure (hypertension) raises the risk of heart disease and stroke, the leading causes of death among Americans. You can lower your risk, however, by first talking with your primary care provider about what your numbers should be and then what lifestyle changes can help control it.

"Your provider can help you determine what numbers are right for you and set the right course of action to lower your high blood pressure," said Dr. Abigail Battjes, primary care provider at River Park Family Medicine in South Bend. "In some cases, making changes in your diet and exercising can get blood pressure under control. In other cases, you may need medications."

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan 1	City Offices Closed
Jan 12	Winter Concert (Battell Center)
Jan 19	Trivia Night (21+) (Battell Center)
Jan 24	Brunch/Classic Movie "Singin' In The Rain" (Battell Center)
Jan 27	Game Night (Battell Center)
Feb 5	Movie Night "La La Land" (Battell Center)
Feb 9	Winter Concert "Out By 8" (Battell Center)
Feb 14	Couples Skate (Merrifield Ice Rink)
Feb 21	Brunch/Classic Movie "Easy Rider" (Battell Center)
Feb 23	Daddy/Daughter Dance (Battell Center)
Feb 24	Mother/Son Dance (Battell Center)

FRIGID FAMILY FUN 5K

January 20, 2018

9:30am

Central Park

Registration: \$25

<https://runsignup.com/Race/IN/Mishawaka/FrigidFamilyFun5K>

ONLINE ACCESS

	http://mishawaka.in.gov
	http://facebook.com/cityofmishawaka
	http://mishawaka.in.gov/communicator
	http://mishawaka.in.gov/parksandrecreation
	https://twitter.com/MishawakaMayor
	https://instagram.com/MishawakaMayor/

A Letter from Mayor Dave Wood *(continued)*

approach. The USEPA offered virtually no funding to accomplish plans, meaning that our citizens must foot the bill in the form of sewer rate hikes. My Administration and the City Council did what we always do; face our responsibilities head on. We developed a Long-Term Control Plan [LTCP] to comply with the Federal Act. Although Mishawaka had already been aggressively working to reduce CSOs, the City dutifully negotiated a LTCP over a ten-year period with the EPA that would take us to ZERO overflows in a typical year. We were given twenty years to complete the LTCP and the original cost was estimated at about \$150 million. Yours truly was forced to sign a Consent Decree with the U.S. Department of Justice in 2014 promising that Mishawaka would comply with our LTCP or I could face criminal penalty up to and including jail time. My wife and kids kinda count on me being around, so we will comply!

Most of our LTCP centered around expanding and increasing the capacity at our wastewater treatment plant, separating sewers in older parts of town, and building a deep wastewater storage tunnel to serve as the backbone of our system. To date, our plan has moved forward with great effect. Our treatment plant has been expanded, and we continue to separate sewers. Indeed, most of our "road" projects are actually sewer projects. The deep tunnel remains the biggest element of the plan to be completed. It was designed as ten-foot diameter, mile-and-a-half long, seventy-foot deep storage tunnel. As the design progressed, the tunnel grew in complexity and so too did the price. We have spent nearly \$6 million to just design the tunnel and we currently stand at 90% design completion and holding. What started out as an estimated \$33 million project quickly ballooned to \$110 million and with the remaining projects in the plan, would cost \$200 million to complete the plan. The result for you: \$150+ monthly sewer bills for each Mishawaka household to pay for the remaining elements of the plan. It became quickly apparent to me that this was not realistic or sustainable. I believe that if we are forced to build the deep tunnel, it would lead to an economic hardship for many of our residents who are on fixed or modest incomes. This would make the City less competitive economically and could ultimately jeopardize the health of our city-owned utility. For those reasons, I decided to pull the plug on the deep tunnel!

For that reason and because there is a new administration at the USEPA, we decided to take a pause this fall and reevaluate progress with our plan to date. We put together a task force consisting of staff and consultants and set about studying our current status and options. What we found was very compelling. Since our baseline year, we have eliminated 99% of sewage discharge into the river by volume at a cost of about \$100 million. Yet we are still on the hook to eliminate the remaining 1% of sewage discharge at a cost of \$200 million. We have reduced our overflows to less than 15 in the typical year, and most of those are very small. We also discovered that while we are held to ZERO overflows, South Bend and Elkhart, the cities that bookend us, are allowed 4 and 9 overflows respectively. Our scientists also ran some modeling that showed that the river is now so clean, that if we were allowed to stay at our current level with no more investment or if we were forced to spend the additional \$200 million, the water quality of the St. Joseph River would remain the same: unchanged.

After reviewing our options and consulting with the Indiana Department of Environmental Management [IDEM], we have decided to engage with the USEPA in an attempt to renegotiate our current Long-Term Control Plan. I have sent a certified letter to the USEPA, now headed by Administrator Scott Pruitt, to officially request renegotiation of our LTCP. We have developed a great strategy with our team of experts. Our goal is to greatly reduce the burden and liability that ultimately, we all would have to bear. We are reasonably optimistic that some good 'ol Princess City common sense will prevail. If it does, we will save millions of our rate payers' dollars collectively. If it doesn't...well, I don't want to think about that now just after Christmas. Please wish us well and Godspeed.

Yours in Mishawaka,



Know Your Numbers... *(cont'd)*

Health Information from Saint Joseph Health System

There are several ways you can prevent or treat high blood pressure:

- Maintain a proper weight
- Get more exercise
- Cut back on salt
- Eat a diet rich in fruits & vegetables
- Limit alcohol
- Stop smoking
- Medication

Make sure to speak with your provider to know what numbers, and what treatments, are right for you.

Happy New Year!!!

MERRIFIELD ICE RINK

ADMISSION & FEES

Youth (5-7)	\$3.00	Re-entry	\$2.00
Adult	\$4.00	Field Trip	\$1.00
Senior (62+)	\$3.50	Skate Rental	\$2.00
Group (10+)	\$2.00	Skate Aid	\$2.00

OPEN SKATE HOURS

Tuesday	4pm - 8pm
Thursday	10am - 2pm
Friday	3pm - 8pm
Saturday / Sunday	12pm-4pm 4:30pm-9pm