



## **Mayors Commission on Water Equity**

### *Field Hearing on Promoting Water Equity in Great Lakes Cities and Safeguarding the Transformative Potential of the Infrastructure Law*

Testimony of Mayor Joe Schember, Erie, PA

One Water Summit

September 15, 2022

On behalf of the City of Erie, thank you for inviting me to participate in today's event. I appreciate the opportunity to present one of the City of Erie's ongoing water-equity issues with you: Urban Flooding and Stormwater.

First, I will provide some background information.

The Environmental Protection Agency defines stormwater as "runoff (that) is generated from rain and snowmelt events that flow over land or impervious surfaces, such as paved streets, parking lots, and building rooftops, and does not soak into the ground. The runoff picks up pollutants like trash, chemicals, oils, and dirt/sediment that can harm our rivers, streams, lakes, and coastal waters." The City of Erie stormwater system consists of 500 plus miles of pipe and lines. Segments of the stormwater system are over 100 years old, with some lines being installed in the late 1800s.

Proper stormwater management is essential to protect the City of Erie's community health and the environment. Several streams contribute to the stormwater system that runs through the Erie Region. The most well-known of these creeks or streams are Mill Creek, Cascade Creek, and Garrison Run. The stormwater system itself contains additional run-off from the region; all contributing to the overall environmental health of Presque Isle Bay and Lake Erie.

Like many Pennsylvania cities, Erie must comply with a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP). The permit, which is a requirement of the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Clean Water Act, authorizes the City to discharge stormwater to waters of the United States, subject to six minimum control measures. These measures include:

- (1) public education and outreach
- (2) public involvement
- (3) illicit discharge detection and elimination
- (4) construction site runoff controls (erosion and sediment control)
- (5) post-construction runoff controls (stormwater management facilities)
- (6) municipal operations pollution prevention and good housekeeping

Additionally, Erie is required to have an approved Pollutant Reduction Plan (PRP) to address a sedimentation impairment on six (6) watercourses within the City limits.

### **Urban Flooding and Stormwater:**

Erie's urban core is particularly vulnerable to flooding and stormwater issues for several reasons:

- oldest infrastructure
- greatest concentration of impervious surface area (highest density)
- lowest elevation (downstream) of an extensive municipal stormwater system

Today, I will present four (4) of Erie's urban flooding and stormwater needs and our proposed infrastructure improvements to address them:

### **1-Garrison Run Rehabilitation Project**

Garrison Run is a watercourse that is conveyed through the City's urban core in a 96-inch tile stormwater pipe, dating to 1917. Most recently, in July 2021, a portion of this line experienced a catastrophic failure. A sinkhole occurred on the property of a commercial business and a nearby residential property experienced significant basement damage.

The total cost of the emergency repair work on Garrison Run was approximately \$1.5 million. This included emergency shoring, commercial & residential property damage, surface restoration, and 436 linear feet of pipe work, including both open excavation and sliplining. Fortunately, Erie was able to utilize federal funds, American Rescue Plan (ARP), to pay for these unexpected repairs.

In addition to the emergency work, there is a direct need to extend the pipe rehabilitation work for an additional 2,800 linear feet, through the City's urban core. The project would replace pipe that is over 100 years old and provide for the safety of all properties that are above this stormwater system. Erie has received an estimate for the planned Garrison Run Rehabilitation Project in the amount of \$1.6 million. Full circumference shotcrete lining, nominal thickness of 2-inches with fiber reinforcement, will be utilized. The project is shovel ready and a funding source, such as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, would ensure that this important project becomes a reality.

### **2- Myrtle Street Storm Sewer Rehabilitation Project:**

The Myrtle Street stormwater area is another portion of Erie's system that needs rehabilitation work. The City conducted television inspection of these storm lines, which revealed significant issues with structural integrity of the pipes. The condition of these twin lines has deteriorated at a rapid pace over the past decade. The remaining life expectancy of these lines is minimal, and the potential exists for a major failure. This construction project will provide a permanent solution and eliminate the City's on-going maintenance and repair costs.

The goal of this project is to renew approximately 3,500 linear feet of twin 36-inch tile storm sewers. Open-cut replacement of these lines presents several challenges. Therefore, the lines will be renewed utilizing the Cured-in-Place Pipe (CIPP) relining method. The Myrtle Street Stormwater Rehabilitation Project is currently under contract for \$1.1 million. American Rescue Plan (ARP) monies are the funding source for this important project.

### **3-Southeast Erie Stormwater Improvement Project:**

The scope of the Southeast Erie Stormwater Improvement Project is large and complex, impacting approximately 217 acres of urban land. Erie intends to solicit consultant proposals to study, present alternatives, perform preliminary engineering, and provide final design services to improve the stormwater system in southeast Erie. Possible construction projects may include the construction of storm relief sewers, upsizing of existing pipes, and/or the installation of stormwater retention/ detention systems.

The overall goals of the project include:

- 1 Reduce flooding in urban neighborhoods
- 2 Improve the conveyance of upstream flows
- 3 Alleviate storm sewer overloads
- 4 Improve the existing drainage system
- 5 Provide safety for Erie's residents

The total estimated cost for the Southeast Erie Stormwater Improvement Project is \$3 million. A project such as this would benefit from a funding source, such as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

#### **4-Cascade Creek – West 16<sup>th</sup> Street Improvement Project**

This area has experienced urban flooding and capacity issues for years. The City has attempted to incrementally address it over the past few years, but without total funding, there is only so much that can be done. The main goal of this improvement project is to replace twin 24-inch tile storm sewers in the West 16<sup>th</sup> Street area. This project will replace deteriorated tile pipes with 750 linear feet of large diameter storm sewer, reduce flooding in nearby neighborhoods, and alleviate storm sewer overloads.

The total estimated cost of the Cascade Creek – West 16<sup>th</sup> Street Improvement Project is \$500,000. Again, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act would benefit this project.

Erie has several other projects that are under development and progressing towards 'shovel-ready' status at this time.

In conclusion, funding provided by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will enable cities, such as Erie, to make further progress on water equity issues, such as Urban Flooding within our dense urban core. The equitable implementation of the Act and its funding will ensure that cities can deliver transformative infrastructure improvements for the benefit of their residents.

Thank you for allowing me to participate and share this important information with you today.