



Candice S. Miller

Public Works Commissioner
Macomb County

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Macomb County Public Works commissioner asking questions about Connor Creek Pump Station

Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller is asking administrators at the Great Lakes Water Authority about the operation of the Connor Creek Pump Station during last weekend's heavy rainfall.

Miller wants to know if the Connor Creek Pump Station in Detroit was properly staffed and prepared. That station sustained an electricity outage during the rainstorms that hit metropolitan Detroit last Friday, June 25, and into the early morning hours of Saturday.

Miller said Wednesday she is hearing unconfirmed reports that backup generators did not automatically turn on, that gates outside the facility wouldn't open and that GLWA employees assigned to Connor Creek did not make other attempts to break down the gates and turn on generators.

"Why weren't they already on station? Everyone knew the rain was coming," Miller said.

"No system is designed for 6, 7 inches of rain," Miller said. "But if there was any human error as well by not getting into the plant and flipping on the generator, or whatever happened there, we need to know, because all the public wants is competency in government. That's a simple ask – competency in government. They want transparency, they want accountability and so do we in Macomb County."

The Connor Creek Pump Station is operated by GLWA, of which Macomb County is a member.

"So we certainly have standing to ask questions," Miller said. "I'm sure the city leaders in Detroit and the city leaders in Grosse Pointe would like some answers."

The area of Detroit where the pump station is located had approximately 7 inches of rain last weekend. The shutdown of the facility had a severe impact to the wastewater management upstream, including into southeast Macomb County.

The shutdown of the pump station caused the Marter Pump Station on Jefferson Avenue at the border of Macomb County and Wayne County to be shut down in order to prevent more flow from heading through the Jefferson Interceptor sewer toward the Connor Creek Pump Station. That, in

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turn, caused combined stormwater and sanitary sewage to back up in the sewer system that serves St. Clair Shores and the city of Eastpointe.

During the downpours and as wastewater backed up in the pipe along the Jefferson corridor, all three pumps at Chapaton began overheating while working at maximum capacity to handle the flow. The alarms went off on the pumps, the building was shaking and a manhole cover blew up in the air.

Still, dozens of homes in St. Clair Shores sustained basement flooding – the exact total has not been determined – but the backup of sewage would have been into thousands of homes in both St. Clair Shores and Eastpointe had Chapaton Pump Station operators not discharged the treated sewage from the basin and from the emergency bypass, Miller said.

“We were the last line of defense,” the commissioner said. “Our team at Chapaton did a tremendous job working through this rain event.”

“Guess what happens in Michigan? It rains! And it’s going to rain again, and the next time, we need to be better prepared.”

Miller added: “I hope the Great Lakes Water Authority provides some answers. Don’t go to the default position of worrying about litigation. We need to be better prepared for the next time we get a heavy rain event like that.

VIDEO: Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller asks questions about the operation of the Cannon Creek Pump Station during heavy rain June 25-26. <https://youtu.be/y6l3BjfoWs8>

PHOTO: Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller at one of three pumps at the Chapaton Pump Station in St. Clair Shores.



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