



Candice S. Miller

Public Works Commissioner
Macomb County

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Macomb County inspects giant pumps to prevent basement flooding

After intense use during very heavy rainstorms last summer, the decades-old massive pumps that helped prevent basement flooding in thousands of homes in southeast Macomb County recently underwent extensive inspection to ensure they remain up to the task.

“After being critical of the Great Lakes Water Authority for not being proactive, we are being proactive with our own facility,” Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller said. “No infrastructure can completely handle the kind of rain events we had in June and July. But when you criticize, you’d better make sure you’re taking care of your own backyard.”

The three giant pumps inside the Chapaton Pump Station in St. Clair Shores were inspected by the pumps’ manufacturer, Fairbanks Morse, and an electrical contractor. The motors were rebuilt about 10 years ago. Each has 2,750 horsepower and requires 130 gallons of oil.

“By being proactive and inspecting our pumps, we’re making sure we don’t have an issue when we run the pumps in heavy rain events. We found a couple of issues – nothing critical – that we’re going to fix,” Miller said.

During the June 25-26 storm that dumped more than 3 inches of rain on St. Clair Shores and Eastpointe, the intense combined flow of stormwater and sanitary sewage forced the pumps to operate at full capacity for extensive periods of time. Rainfall in parts of northeast Detroit ranged from more than 4 inches to approximately 7 inches. Thousands of basements flooded in the Jefferson/Chalmers area of Detroit and most of the Grosse Pointe communities. Electrical problems hampered the Freud Pump Station and Conners Creek Pump Station, both in Detroit. That 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 Conner Creeks and Freud pump stations. In turn, that caused

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combined stormwater and sanitary sewage to back up in the sewer system that serves the St. Clair Shores/Eastpointe drainage district.

“Chapaton became the last line of defense,” Miller said.

All three pumps at Chapaton began overheating while working at maximum capacity to handle the flow. Alarms went off, the building shook and a manhole cover on Nine Mile Road blew up in the air. Flow was diverted into the underground Chapaton Retention Basin and the Nine Mile Emergency Bypass.

Miller subsequently called for an independent investigation and operational audit of electrical issues and staff preparedness at Conners Creek and Freud, both overseen by GLWA.

In a separate, wider example of underground infrastructure inspections and maintenance to prevent environmental disasters and large sinkholes, the Macomb County Public Works Office under Miller’s direction late last year launched a widespread inspection cycle for 26 miles of large sanitary sewers, 360 manholes and other aspects of sanitary sewage infrastructure. It’s the largest inspection program of its kind in the department’s history.

VIDEO: Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller discusses the importance of inspections of the giant pumps at the Chapaton Pump Station. https://youtu.be/SRx-OILyX_Y

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



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