



Park Township

Resident Guide to the Park West Drain

Dear Park Township Resident,

Over the course of the past year, the Township has been studying the causes and effects of the high water table throughout the Township. That effort concluded with a report from the Drainage Sub-committee of the Energy and Environmental Committee which recommended the construction of a new drainage system that would carry excess water from the northern portion of the Township to Lake Macatawa. We are providing this information to you because you may be located within the drain district and to help you better understand the process, funding, and other issues related to this proposed project, now known as the Park West Drain. We have also included a flyer entitled the “Citizen Guide to the Drain Code” to also help familiarize you with the procedures of establishing drainage districts.

What is the Park West Drain?

As proposed, this system of pipes will begin in the vicinity of 160th Avenue and New Holland, on the very north edge of the Township and will follow a course down streets and across open land and then south on 168th Avenue, to an outlet at 168th and Lake Macatawa. A map is attached for your review.

A drainage project is the creation or expansion of a drain and is designed to prevent flooding, to provide better drainage for agriculture or other development. A “drain” may include roadside ditches, agricultural drains, tiling systems under agricultural or developed land, and may include creeks, rivers and lakes.

Why this Drain and this Route?

As detailed in the report from the Drainage Subcommittee, the unusually high water table is caused by several years of above normal precipitation, including both rain and snow fall. A complete analysis is included in the Subcommittee’s final report and can be viewed at our website: www.parktownship.org. Click on “News” tab, then “Ground Water Info” to find the “Environmental Energy Committee Final Report.” While the eastern portion of the township (east of 160th) is well served by a network of county drains, the portion west of 160th generally lacks sufficient drainage systems to provide for excess water to be channeled out of the area. Over time, this excess water has seeped into the water table and caused it to raise the water table to historic levels, often just inches below the ground surface. This drain is designed to provide an outlet for that excess water to be channeled away before it has an opportunity to raise the water table even higher.

This route has been proposed in order to provide the most benefit, to the most affected properties for the lowest cost per property. Several optional routes were closely examined by our consulting engineers, including routes that would have discharged directly into Lake Michigan, into Pine Creek, into Winstrom Creek and down 160th into Lake Macatawa. By charting the most affected properties, this route was selected as having the most cost effective benefit for the number of properties affected.

What is the status of the Drain project now?

At the time the final report of the Drainage Subcommittee was accepted and supported by the Township Board, the report was forwarded to the Ottawa County Drain Commissioner for final design and construction. The Drain Commissioner has authority of drainage issues within Ottawa County. The Commissioner is under very tight state laws in regards to the “how” and “why” of any drainage project. In this case, the Drain Commissioner is the person (entity) in charge of the project from this time forward. The Drain Commissioner is required to appoint a Board of Determination, which will conduct a public meeting, to which you will be invited, to determine the necessity of the drain and whether it is conducive to public health, convenience or welfare. Assuming a favorable determination by the Board of Determination, the Drain Commissioner will then be authorized to complete the final engineering, prepare bid documents, arrange for the financing and oversee the construction.

It is important to note that the final route of the drain has not yet been approved. The final route will be dependent upon final engineering and the availability of any easements that may be required.

The Board of Determination will hold a hearing on this project on Wednesday, November 11 at 6:30 p.m. at the West Ottawa Performing Arts Center in the Harbor Lights Middle School, 1024 - 136th Ave. Should the Board determine the project is a necessity, the design plans for the project can then be completed over the winter, and perhaps be ready to begin construction next spring.

How will I know if I am in the Drainage District?

You are receiving this short form because you may be in the district. As mentioned, we have only completed our preliminary engineering but at this time we estimate that the bulk of the drainage district will include most properties between 160th and Lakeshore, and between New Holland and Lake Macatawa. There are exceptions, of course, and please refer to the enclosed map (the outer dashed line) for a better idea. Again, this is preliminary and a final determination of the district will be dependent on final engineering. The drainage district is determined by engineering calculations and is very dependent upon the direction that the water flows when draining. Some have characterized this as being similar to the “continental divide.” If the water draining from your property will be able to be carried away by the drain, you most likely will be inside the district. This is simplistic, of course, but helps some to visualize how water flows and how the drain will impact that flow. Even though you may not have experienced any problems from high water, your property may be within the district if it “contributes” water to those areas that have had problems. Again, final engineering will determine if this is the case.

What will this Drain Cost?

At the present time, after our preliminary engineering, the total cost is estimated at just over \$6 million. While that might seem expensive, the project will involve more than 8 miles of pipe and serve more than 5,000 acres.

What will My Share of the Drain Be?

As mentioned, upon a favorable determination by the Board of Determination at the public meeting, the Drain Commissioner will then have the responsibility to construct the drain and to determine the sharing of the costs. Under previous drain projects, it is not unusual for the local unit, in this case Park Township, to be liable for up to 20 percent of the total costs. Also, the County Road Commission and County at large also have a share, based on drainage of County roads, which has been estimated to be somewhere between 5 and 10 percent. That leaves around 70 to 75 percent of the total, or roughly \$4.5 million to be spread among the various properties within the district. It is difficult to determine individual costs at this time but, considering that there are more than 5,000 acres and more than 3,000 properties that may be inside the district. The actual formula used by the Drain Commissioner includes the size of the parcel, the proximity to the drain, the type of soils or hard surface that contributes water run-off, and several other factors. The numbers are dependent upon the benefit received by a property and that will not be known until the formula is complete and the engineering finalized.

Once the formula is determined and construction bids for the project have been received, you will be informed of the opportunity to visit the Drain Commissioner’s office to review the cost to you and the financing terms available. A drain project of this magnitude usually can be financed from between 10 to 20 years.

So, What’s Next?

In part, the next step is to wait for the Drain Commissioner to notify you of the November 11 public hearing, that being the meeting of the Board of Determination. (See the flyer entitled “Citizen Guide to the Drain Code” for more detailed information on drainage district procedures.) You may wish to attend that meeting. Once the drain is “officially” established, keep up to date on the process by logging on to the Park Township website (www.parktownship.org) or the Ottawa County Drain Commissioner’s website (www.miottawa.org/CoGov/Drain). You may also call, write or email either the Township or the Drain Commissioner’s office.

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