

## Coffee with the Mayor

### Ser 10

Stopped by the coffee shop this morning for a cup of regular Borja coffee. I do enjoy a good cup of coffee from there. Not so much a fan of any flavored coffee but will try it occasionally. As you may have guessed I enjoy coffee, but I have my preferences. The cup! I much prefer drinking coffee from a cup with a big handle. At home I have two favorites. I will drink from smaller cups and even paper cups when there are no other options. Just sayin'.

A tale of two sewers. It was the ok of times and the not-so ok of times, so the story goes. Ok, I'm no Charles Dickens! However, I would like to talk about the cities' two sewer systems, wastewater and storm water. First, storm water, or the ok of times. This sewer gets it's name from the intent on which the sewer system is designed. The rain follows gravity and the path of least resistance along the side of city streets (well mostly anyway) or absorbed in the ground. Rainwater flows from the roof to the gutters located at the eaves and down downspouts where it should empty into the street or yard. At that point it falls through a grate and travels through pipes until it exits into a stream or possibly pond. Often these grates get covered over with leaves, gravel, or pretty much anything that will not go through the access. Ponds occur in unwanted places when that happens. Keeping these grates clear is normally the responsibility of the street department which they do on a regular basis. That said, it is not uncommon for residents to clean off covered grates near their home so the water can continue to flow. This definitely helps and is much appreciated. There are locations in town that are known to flood depending on the amount of rainfall we receive, like Humphrey's Park. Work over the years has been completed to handle these areas and the ponding subsides relatively quickly. Any and all engineering plans must consider the storm sewer and drainage as an important part of the planning. A lot of work is currently being done by the street department to identify, clean out, and document the storm sewers throughout the city.

The not-so ok sewer is the wastewater system. This system is more extensive and in many cases a priority to the city. Almost every sink, kitchen and bathroom and toilets are connected to this system. The complexity of this system is compounded due to the fact that everything entering it must be processed at the wastewater treatment facility. Getting to this location in most cases requires lift stations to allow for the flow to continue on to be processed at the treatment facility. There are several processes at the treatment facility that are conducted and monitored on a 24 hour basis. I can't explain or even begin to describe the processes required but rely on the three city employees dedicated to this area to keep things flowing and monitored. On a normal day the treatment plant processes over 1 million gals of wastewater daily with a designed capacity of roughly 2.9 million gallons.

The water exiting the facility after treatment is clear, safe, tested on a regular basis and empties into a nearby ditch.

The not-so ok part is when there is significant, or even moderate rainfall, and storm water, from downspouts and basement sump pumps, enters the wastewater system. It also happens when ground water enters the wastewater system through cracks or openings in the pipes. This is called Infiltration and Intrusion (I and I). This extra load on the wastewater treatment facility causes not only an increase in utility usage and cost but, because it can significantly exceed capacity, will cause less filtered water to empty into the ditch. This extra load also impacts the wear on the systems used to process the water leading to earlier than expected replacement of the equipment.

The majority of the wastewater system is old, in some areas installed back to 1906. Regardless of the age of the system, tree roots work into the pipes and are an ever-present problem in preventing good flow. Manmade objects not meant to be in the wastewater or storm sewer systems also prevent constant flow. Let's be honest, no one wants their nearby storm water sewer or especially their wastewater sewer to not flow well!

I would encourage everyone to be aware of what goes down the drain. Also, look at the downspouts. Do you know if they feed into the wastewater system or drain into the street or yard. If you're not sure, contact the city and we will have someone look for you. The focus is to divert storm water away from the wastewater system.

Evan Witty project update: The positive news is the Comcast line has been removed from the existing poles. The city took steps to evaluate the possible sink hole to see if it could be dealt with without involving the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). While the result was inconclusive, two more probable sink holes were discovered nearby by the mowing crew. We met with a DNR representative on Tues and will be awaiting their timeline for resolving these sinkholes. Once these are filled we can continue with installing the parking area and fence.