

The City of Baltimore's Modified Consent Decree Public Information Session was held on January 23, 2018, in the first floor conference room at the Maryland Department of the Environment (1800 Washington Blvd, Baltimore, MD 21230). Director Rudolph S. Chow, P.E. welcomed attendees, and DPW Legal Chief Paul De Santis gave a [presentation](#) on the Modified Consent Decree and the City's progress under the Decree over the past 12 months.

A breakout session followed the presentation where attendees could engage directly with subject matter experts at learning stations in the conference room. The learning stations highlighted the primary activities of the Modified Consent Decree and the City's progress in those areas. Verbal responses were provided to citizens' questions, and comment cards were also available for submittal and collection throughout the session. A summary of each learning station and the questions/comments received is provided below.

Learning Station 1. Collection System Tools

The main focus of this learning station and its content was to educate the public about the City's Collection and Transmission System, sanitary sewer overflow (SSO) structures, and the hydraulic model and its application to the design, rehabilitation, and operation of the Collection System. The learning station also highlighted the implementation of Paragraph 9 construction projects. Finally the learning station discussed the benefits of the level of protection and reduction in SSO volume once improvement projects are completed. The station included the City's hydraulic modeler and the engineer who oversees the Consent Decree design and construction projects.

Questions/comments posed at station:

- Where are the rain gauges and flow meters and how do they work?
- Is Baltimore County coordinating with the City on the CD?
- How would you know how much flow is coming from County to the City?
- How do you model the upgrades coming from Baltimore County?
- There is large growth in Towson. How is the City accommodating that growth?
 - How will the growth affect the capacity of the City's system?
 - Will the growth cause additional SSOs?
- How well is Baltimore County doing on their Consent Decree?
- There was updated rehabilitation data on the City's website for pipes and manholes. Will that data be put back on the website?
- Where are the 15 open SSO structures located?
 - What is the schedule for eliminating the SSO structures, and how can the public track these?
- Will a map of the locations and outlets of the SSO structures be included on the DPW website?
- Does the rehabilitation work affect water quality?
- Where are the City's wastewater treatment plants located?
- How old are the City's wastewater treatment plants?
- Do the City and County share the cost of the Back River WWTP Headworks Improvement Project?

Learning Station 2. Communications/Local Economic Development

The main focus of this learning station and its content was two-fold: 1.To ensure effective and accurate communications with the public, get feedback, and help the public navigate information on the DPW website; 2.To ensure the public understands the City's ongoing efforts and program developed to support Small Business Development. The learning station included representatives from the DPW Division of Communications and Community Affairs and the DPW Small Business Development program.

Questions/comments posed at station:

- Suggestion to hold the public info session while the comment period on documents is still open.
- Interest expressed in having DPW speakers for small groups like garden clubs and community associations on topics like FOG and sewage issues.
- Suggestion for a DPW public relations program that is more robust, reaches out to public and informs on what DPW is doing, where money is going, and benefits; not just website.
- Who are the DPW community liaisons?
- How do businesses enroll in the DPW Small Business Development program?

Learning Station 3. Collection System Maintenance

The main focus of this learning station and its content was to inform the public about the Collection System, maintenance and inspection activities happening as a result of the DPW Office of Asset Management (OAM) programs and the DPW Utility Maintenance Division (UMD). These programs ensure that the Collection System is operated and maintained appropriately. In addition, the station highlighted some “do’s and don’ts” for customers to help the Collection System operate properly. The learning station included the Chief of OAM and the Division Chief of UMD.

Questions/comments posed at station:

- Suggestion to publish on the DPW website SSO tracking, both number of events and volume for dry and wet-weather SSOs.
- Suggestion to develop matrices to track progress and efficacy of the Consent Decree projects, and publish them on the website.
- What is DPW doing to keep people from disposing grease down the drain?
- Suggestion to keep data on the DPW website related to water quality
- What is being done to reduce SSOs?

Learning Station 4. Compliance

The main focus of this learning station and its content was to provide information on water quality monitoring, sanitary discharges of unknown origin (SDUOs), and illegal connection enforcement performed by DPW. The station walked citizens through water quality data available online and provided an overview of how these compliance actions are reported in: the City's Calendar Quarterly Report and the City's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Annual Report. The Chief and Section Chief of the DPW Office of Compliance and Laboratories – who oversee these programs – were on-hand to answer questions and engage directly with citizens.

Questions/comments posed at station:

- For SDUOs abated last year, what were the origins – public or private – and what steps were taken against those responsible?
 - How can the public track new/unresolved SDUOs?
- Where is the nearest ammonia screening and fecal coliform location(s) downstream of Lake Roland?
- When and how frequent is water quality monitoring data published to the DPW website?
- What information does the MS4 annual report provide?
- How many ammonia screening monitoring locations have been added since the monitoring began?
- What are indicators for bacteria? How do they differ for non-tidal versus tidal waters?
- Are there additional DPW initiatives to track bacteria?
- Does OCAL conduct supplemental investigations related to water quality?

Learning Station 5. Facilities

The main focus of this learning station and its content was to provide information on the Back River Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Headworks Project. The Headworks project includes facilities for equalization storage, an influent pumping station, fine screening, and grit removal. The project will alleviate the flow backup currently caused in the Collection System by a hydraulic restriction originating at the Back River WWTP. The project is also projected to reduce SSO volume by a considerable amount. The learning station included the Division Chief of the City's Wastewater Treatment Plants and Pumping Stations, the chief DPW facilities engineer, and the project manager for the Headworks Project.

Questions/comments posed at station:

- What is the flow capacity of the new Headworks Project?
- When will the project be completed?
- How much does this project cost?
- Will the wastewater treatment plant remain in service while the Headworks Project is under construction?
- What is the purpose of the project?
- Does the City coordinate with Baltimore County on such Projects?
- How long has hydraulic restriction existed in the system?

Learning Station 6. Facilities

The main focus of this learning station and its content was to provide an overview of the City's response to sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) and Building Backups, new resources to assist residential customers, and steps customers can take to reduce SSOs and backups. The learning station included representatives from the DPW legal office and DPW's Consent Decree program management team.

Questions/comments posed at station:

- What is the timeframe of the pending Emergency Response Plan?
- How will the Emergency Response Plan address Building Backups and SSOs?
- How will the Expedited Reimbursement Program be advertised?
- What is the Expedited Reimbursement Program rollout schedule?
- Does the reimbursement program include sewer backups that occurred prior to the Modified Consent Decree?
- General approval of layout, phrasing, and clarity of the Building Backup Guide was shared.
- The City's efforts with transparency of the Consent Decree were complimented.

General Session Comments

Questions/comments posed by session attendees:

- The Towson area is growing, resulting in increased flows into the City's Jones Falls system. Various City-County agreements and the County's Consent Decree require the County to remove infiltration and inflow (I/I) from the County's sewer system.
 - What is the City doing to ensure that the County is complying with these requirements?
 - Is the County complying?
 - Is the County providing information?
- Citizens expressed concern regarding sewer lines near Lake Roland for the Jones Falls watershed. Some citizens believe that these issues, contribute to the fecal coliform levels in Lake Roland and Jones Falls.
 - Are there any places to add another sewer line under the Lake, or to install a larger pipe with greater design capacity?
 - If there are no such places, are any steps contemplated to require the County to eliminate these excess overflows?

