

CITY OF MOUNT VERNON
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Tanya Newell, Mayor's Office
Office (740) 393-9517

North End Water System Showing Age

MOUNT VERNON - In January 2020, the City of Mount Vernon started replacing water valves and installing new fire hydrants on the north end of town, not fully knowing the condition of the city's aging and buried infrastructure. This project was prioritized by a condition assessment completed in 2018. The city knew this project would be challenging as this is an older part of the city's water system.

During construction, work was delayed multiple times due to old valves not closing properly. The City's Water Department continues to roll with the punches and make headway on the much needed improvements to the area surrounding North Sandusky Street. To date, seven (7) new fire hydrants, eight (8) new watch valves for fire hydrants and four (4) inline water valves have been replaced. A total of 420 feet of new replacement pipe is being installed on Belmont Avenue, replacing old 4" water line with a new 6" class 53 ductile iron water line. This will improve water availability to fire hydrants in this area. The new generation water lines are vastly different from their 1960's predecessors in many ways, beginning with the engineering of the pipe structure itself. The project manager is Jason Epley, Assistant to the City Engineer, who is working closely with Kenneth Griffith, Assistant Utility Director, on this project.

"In many of our north end neighborhoods we see 1960's era cast iron pipes. Additionally, we see soils with a higher corrosion potential than other parts of Mount Vernon. This creates two problems; cast iron is brittle and fractures easily with ground movement such as freezing and thawing and the accelerated corrosion by the soil weakens these pipes. Today, we use ductile iron pipes which is a type of cast iron that is heat-treated to be more flexible or "ductile" and in areas of corrosive soils we use polyethylene covering over the waterline to reduce the corrosion potential", said Brian Ball, City Engineer.

"As this project is completed, the city crews will be better able to isolate sections of our water system, reduce the size of future boil advisories and ensure that we can provide water to our critical customers during shutdowns", said Kenneth Griffith, Assistant Utility Director.

"When you don't see it, you forget it's there until you need it", said Mayor Matt Starr. "The much needed improvements that we are making in the north end are long overdue. Thanks to a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), we are able to leverage several projects into one, which covers a wider geographic area of Mount Vernon. When this is done, we shouldn't have to worry about it for another 75 years or more".

Thanks to hard work by the administration and city council, a series of public meetings were conducted in 2018 to look at needs on the North end of Mount Vernon and led by Amy Schocken with Community Development Consultants (CDC) of Ohio and John Francis, Second Ward City Councilman. As a result of the needs identified in these meetings, the city has received grants to make major improvements. These improvements include:

1. The aforementioned water valve and fire hydrant effort.
2. New curb and gutter (both sides) and new sidewalk (south side) on Belmont Avenue.

3. New stormwater system including curb and gutter (both sides) and underground drain pipes on Mulberry Street from Belmont Ave. to Calhoun Street. The east side of Mulberry will receive a new sidewalk within this section of Mulberry Street.
4. As a companion project, the city, in a partnership with ODOT, will be completely rebuilding North Sandusky Street between Franklin and James Streets. This project is partly funded by ODOT Safety Funds. This section of State Route 13 sees an average of three crashes per month based on the 2016-2018 Safety Study. This part of the project will include significant utility upgrades. (Do follow-on article about Safety Project)
5. Construction of the future ShellmarPark at the southwest corner of Marion and Madison Streets, a former parking area from the American National Can factory.

Additionally, utility improvements are being planned for the Clinton Road and Mansfield Avenue area.

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A section of one of the water lines was pulled and replaced at the north end of Mount Vernon. The original pipe was installed in 1962 and has given way to corrosion. Mount Vernon crews continue to repair or replace the water lines as they update fire hydrants and watch valves.