

**From:** [Linda](#)  
**To:** [All Alders](#)  
**Subject:** Agenda #49, Legistar 87717  
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The Capital City Trail Box Culvert Replacement project would extend for 3 blocks along the bike path (all of the 900 and 800 blocks and most of the 700 block). The cost of this is projected to be \$3.5 million.

My question is whether this project is worthwhile. Staff told the Board of Public Works that the storm sewer is relatively flat, so it mostly functions as an underground pond, and mentioned the future intent to install storm through S Paterson Street. The Board Chair stated that \$3.5 million seems to be a lot to pay for an underground pool and that it seems somewhat of a temporary fix. The Chair asked whether there was an idea of how many years it's going to be in before S Paterson would be online. The answer was no, followed by a statement that the watershed study is still ongoing.

The watershed study was approved in April 2020. There have been four amendments that added additional services and extended the completion date, including the fourth amendment in October 2023 that added the task of evaluating flood mitigation alternatives. The fifth amendment, last November, did not add any tasks but it extended the completion date to September 30, 2025.

With about 5 months to go before the study is completed, it would make sense to wait for the final results before spending \$3.5 million dollars. Statements are made on the City's watershed pages that flooding mitigation measures are costly, will take decades to implement, and that projects will be prioritized (factors include impact on emergency services, location of vulnerable populations, if the project also improves stormwater quality, whether other projects are occurring nearby, and if outside funding is available).

It is not clear how this box culvert replacement became a priority project – it certainly has not been mentioned in the current or past budgets as an upcoming project. Up until the development of two new buildings, the flooding, or potential flooding, did not reach buildings – projections involved open land or streets, generally up to 1 foot. What has been said by staff is (1) the new development at 306 S Paterson found water leaking into the development and that this location had the worst pipe and (2) 320 S Brearly, another new development by the same developer, will be installing a new sanitary sewer in this public right-of-way next spring, so the City needs to have the storm completed by the end of October.

As to potential for flooding at either of these locations, the conditional use approval conditions said (1) the area has been determined by City Engineering to have a known flooding risk and (2) engineering set a minimum protective lowest entrance elevation opening, noting that this minimum was not intended to be protective in all cases and strongly encouraged the developer to complete their own engineering analysis. Funds should not be spent imprudently on a fix that could well be temporary – the developer was well aware of the flooding risk (which, according to the flooding maps is primarily up to 1 foot, and 2 feet in a few spots under extreme conditions). As to the possible conflict with the sanitary sewer, the only readily apparent conflict is that the existing box culvert will need to be crossed, a problem that should have a solution other than the expenditure of \$3.5M.

It may be possible to do a fix that does not waste money. The 900 block most likely needs to be done even if the S Paterson project happens. At S. Brearly a 29x45 inch pipe

connects to 3.5x2.5inch pipe, and close to Livingston the 3.5x2.5 inch pipe connects to a 43x68 inch pipe (the same size as the proposed pipe), thus connecting should not be problem. The existing 3.5x2.5 inch pipe could be repaired as needed (or perhaps lined) in the 700 and 800 blocks. This may be able to serve until such time that the watershed study is completed and mitigation measures prioritized.

I became interested in the project due to the long established prairie in the 800 block. In 2023 when the developer sought conditional use approval to build 306 S Paterson along two-thirds of the 800 block, the Plan Commission recognized the importance of the prairie and added 12 conditions of approval to protect the prairie. The Board of Public Works also recognized the importance of the prairie and added the condition, as reflected in the agenda, that City work with the prairie partners and their input. (The resolution as approved by the BPW actually added a "good faith" working requirement.)

Respectfully Submitted,  
Linda Lehnertz