

Groundbreaking marks start of Berry Lane drainage improvements

BY BILL JONES

bjones@hfchronicle.com

The start of the long-awaited Berry Lane Drainage Improvement Project was celebrated during a groundbreaking ceremony May 5 on Berry Lane, between Balmoral and MacFarlane Crescents.

Construction on the storm sewer improvements began in mid-April with a planned completion date of late October.

For Lillie Lacey, who lives just two houses down from where the groundbreaking ceremony took place, this project has been a long time coming. When the street floods, water comes into Lacey's garage and basement. She said she appealed to the village for years with photos, emails, texts and phone calls before seeing this "tremendous" project start.

"I'm happy," Lacey said. "This is a good day for me."

Valencia Harris, who lives right next to the groundbreaking site, said she has gotten 4-5 feet of water in her home on four different occasions since moving there in 2014. Water fills her driveway, which has a downward slope toward the garage, pushes through the garage into the family room and basement.

"My husband and I are very excited for this day to come," Harris said. "It's been a long time coming."

Derrick Smith, a 24-year resident of the



Bill Jones/H-F Chronicle

Tossing some dirt on the pile at a May 5 groundbreaking ceremony for the Berry Lane Drainage Improvement Project on Berry Lane were, left to right, Rick Bryant of Congressman Robin Kelly's office, Col. Paul Culberson, Sandy Hatcher-Holmes, Flossmoor Mayor Michelle Nelson, Lillie Lacey and Valencia Harris.

Heather Hills neighborhood, said, "For the last 20 years, we've been dealing with this water situation." He'd thought about leaving the neighborhood but now, "This project actually means that I'll be able to stay in my house."

The project includes the installation of 2,600 feet of concrete storm sewer, 14 manholes and 18 storm catch basins along Berry Lane, Bob-O-Link, Oakmont Avenue and Maryland Avenue, where it will connect with an existing storm sewer under Sterling Avenue, according to a press

release issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The project is designed to reduce both residential and roadway flooding in the Heather Hills neighborhood.

Airy's Inc., of Tinley Park, is handling construction. Federal funding is covering \$1.5 million of the total cost, while the Village of Flossmoor has put in a total of \$1.95 million between matching funds and options exercised above the base bid, including replacing the existing pavement on Berry Lane with permeable interlocking concrete pavers.

The village also received grants from the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to support its flood-mitigation efforts. More than \$700,000 in grant money is helping to pay for this work.

During the groundbreaking ceremony, Flossmoor Mayor Michelle Nelson extended her thanks to those agencies, as well as to U.S. Rep. Robin Kelly (D-Ill.) and her staff, who helped secure funds for the project. Nelson also noted the design engineering work of Baxter & Woodman Consulting Engineers.

She thanked village trustees and staff and included former Mayor Paul Braun and former trustees Diane Williams and Perry Hoag for their work.

"Flossmoor's strength is in our ability to rally people and resources to solve problems and help each other," Nelson said. "The flooding on Berry Lane and the Flossmoor Viaduct are definitely big problems."

Col. Paul Culberson, commander for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Chicago District, also highlighted the fact that so many organizations and people worked together to make the project possible.

"It's really about all of the partnerships we have that we're able to accomplish this," Culberson said.

Questions continuing on move of Secret Garden sculpture

BY BILL JONES

bjones@hfchronicle.com

The Flossmoor Village Board's April decision to OK a proposal from the Public Art Commission that includes moving the Secret Garden sculpture from outside the Flossmoor Public Library to Heather Hill Elementary School in a collection shuffle is still not sitting well with some folks.

At the board's May 16 meeting, the discussion continued.

Flossmoor resident and former library board member Kathleen Tisoncik

addressed the board to share her concerns about the move.

"That statue has been on the library premises for 20-something years," Tisoncik said. "It really is part of the identity of the library. I don't know why it was decided it should be moved, but I really object to it. I think it would be a disservice to the library and the community. ... I hope that you will reconsider."

Secret Garden, part of the village's permanent sculpture collection, is to move as part of an effort to reinvigorate the overall collection and bring a piece

to Heather Hill. Trustee George Lofton was the only trustee to vote against the latest collection changes, but several board members shared their apprehension about that particular move.

Trustee Brian Driscoll said one weekend he was "inundated" with calls about the sculpture.

"It's definitely garnered a lot more interest than I think we first knew when we first tackled it," he said. "I have not heard from anybody who wants to move it."

Mayor Michelle Nelson noted she has heard the same.



Marilyn Thomas/H-F Chronicle

Residents are voicing their objections to moving the Secret Garden sculpture from its place at the Flossmoor Public Library.



COMPASSIONATE END-OF-LIFE CARE FOR YOUR LOVED ONE

Call 708-331-1360 or visit
UChicagoMedicine.org/Ingalls
for more information.



UChicago Medicine

Ingalls Memorial