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Citizens react to study

By Jenni Vincent / Journal Staff Writer

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Editor's note: This is the first of a two-part series. The next article will detail possible alternatives that could be considered to help alleviate Inwood's flooding problems.

INWOOD - Tia Fosberg is no stranger to the damage caused by the flooding in Inwood or the frustration she and others experience each time the waters rise.

Fosberg, who has lived at her home on Jubal Early Avenue for 10 years, estimates she's suffered at least \$60,000 from flood damage.

"Sadly, I'm not the worst home in my neighborhood," said Fosberg, who lives in the Inwood East subdivision.

At one point, she had nearly 6 feet of water in her basement, she said.

"And when we got the 3 inches of rain in March, my basement flooded again, but it wasn't nearly as bad," Fosberg said.

Those experiences motivated Fosberg to attend Monday night's public meeting at Musselman High School, where an engineering company hired by the Berkeley County Public Service Sewer District explained its ongoing work to develop a watershed plan to help resolve flooding and stormwater quality issues within the Inwood community.

Engineer Dan Whited of Woolpert Inc., Inwood project manager, told the audience of about 15 people that "significant modeling work" has been done to build on existing studies and help develop potential remedies to the community's flooding problems.

Since company officials first held a similar public meeting locally last spring, they have identified eight specific problem areas in the community that are most prone to flooding as well as 13 possible alternatives to help alleviate the problem, Whited said.

Problematic areas include: Outfall detention north of the Inwood quarry; Old Inwood-True Apple Way; Inwood East; Pedal Car Drive; U.S. 11 near the Inwood Assembly of God Church; the intersection of W.Va. 51 and U.S. 11; U.S. 11 near Musselman High School; and Declaration/Putnam in Sylvan Grove.

This work is being done through a \$1 million grant that was funded by the federal Environmental Protection Agency, West Virginia Bureau of Public Health and BCPSSD.

Its work is expected to be completed by mid-July, according to BCPSSD General Manager Curtis Keller, who also attended Monday night's public session.

Part of the reason this work is difficult is due to Inwood's topography. It lies in a three-square-mile watershed that is basically a depression with no outlet for stormwater discharge, Keller said.

But Keller is optimistic about what now is being accomplished and how residents' lives may be improved because of it.

He also understands no solution will be quick, easy or cheap, so residents may have to wait a little longer before any action is taken.

"Some of the people who were here at this meeting have certainly experienced this flooding problem for themselves. And if you talk to some of them, they say this problem goes back 20 or 30 years - some say it was caused by the construction of Interstate 81," Keller said.

"And there has been work on this problem for many, many years. I think the big thing is that people want to see some actual construction. But we've gotten further in probably the last year and a half that we've been working on it than ever before, and we're also closer to being able to construct something, so we'll just keep pushing forward," he said.

Fosberg also is hopeful but worries whether plans will move forward and whether funding will materialize to make the remediation plans a reality.

"I am scared because we've been here before, as far as having a plan and then not being able to get the funding. Are we going to fail at getting the funding again? Which means we'd have to go through this in another five years, when it has grown to a \$40 million budget," Fosberg said, adding that she'd already contacted area legislative officials to request their support.

However, Inwood resident Edgar Mason said he wasn't impressed with what he heard at the meeting and doesn't believe anything will come of this latest work.

"It just doesn't impress me, and I've been in this project since the 1970s. We'd also get money and we'd be ready to go on a program and it would fall apart. ... There have just been too many disappointments for me to have any faith that this is ever going to happen - at least in my lifetime," Mason said.

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