



Statement from Tanisha R. Briley, City of Cleveland Heights, City Manager

On behalf of the City of Cleveland Heights and its City officials and residents, I would like to clarify the recent article relating to the U.S. EPA legal action filed against the City on July 19, 2017 as it does not tell the full story of the City's efforts.

This legal action is the result of more than two years of cooperative negotiation between the City and U.S. and Ohio EPA. The proposed consent decree reflects the City's commitment to the Clean Water Act and the improved maintenance, operation and management that will be developed over the next few years.

When the City's sewer system was built one hundred years ago, it was designed to prevent backups into homes by storm water overflows during heavy rains. The sewer system was designed and constructed in accordance with accepted engineering principles at the time.

City officials have recognized the need to upgrade practices and to carefully study the improvements that might be necessary in order to remediate this century old system to today's requirements and standards. As noted in the article, the City has already made several improvements in the system where frequent problems exist.

The City is and remains committed to protecting our environment and our citizens. The City and U. S. and Ohio EPA agreed that a two-phased approach was the best approach to fully understand the system first in order to develop cost effective improvements. Phase one of the consent decree will include a comprehensive study of the system along with enhanced maintenance and management practices. The second phase will be negotiated following the completion of phase one.

No one at the City has intentionally polluted the waterways that flow through our community, nor is Cleveland Heights the only city with a dated sewer system contributing to the problem. These systems are valuable to the City and its residents, and the consent decree with U.S. and Ohio EPA reflects the City's commitment to be good stewards of our ecosystem's freshwater supply.

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