

Planning years ago helps solve rain problems of today

With over five inches of rain falling in April alone, this spring is proving to be one of the wettest ever. Excessive rainfall in a short period is always difficult to manage but it becomes even more challenging when the ground is already saturated from a previous period of steady rain, as had been the case here in Pittsford.

While we experienced some isolated drainage issues after these storms, there was no major flooding in the town. This was due not only to our response to the storms but also to advance planning.

Our staff members are dedicated to quick response in the aftermath of a rainstorm but also take preventive steps when storms are expected. Our highway crews check and clean drains. Our sewer staff monitors water levels in our retention ponds, such as the one in King's Bend Park, and can send water downstream in a controlled manner to make room for new stormwater in the pond, thus alleviating flooding risk.

The Town of Pittsford also benefits from a more than 30 year history of proactively managing our stormwater system. We put in place laws to protect wetlands in the late 1970s and implemented a Comprehensive Drainage Plan in the early 1980s. This plan led to the creation of policies and standards that protect water quality and prevent flooding. By the early 1990s the Town of Pittsford required construction of stormwater detention ponds and wetlands in new developments; this was over 10 years before similar requirements were implemented at a statewide level.

Our current zoning laws, initially adopted as part of our 1986 comprehensive land use plan, require open space and clustering of impervious surfaces like streets and driveways, which aids in drainage, controls water runoff, and improves water quality.

We maintain an extensive stormwater management system of drains, retention ponds and created stormwater wetlands – over 60 facilities in all, including several that manage stormwater impacts on a regional level. These ponds and wetlands are not only designed to hold back water and prevent flooding; they also help improve water quality by circulating and filtering water before it is returned to our creeks, streams and groundwater.

Many people may not realize that our stormwater sewer system is separate from our sanitary sewer system, which means stormwater is not treated or cleaned before it is returned to the environment. Therefore anything that goes into the storm drains of your street gutters goes directly into our local creeks and streams, and eventually into larger bodies of water like Irondequoit Bay and Lake Ontario.

An effective stormwater system benefits all of us, including wildlife. The Town of Pittsford is a member of the Monroe County Stormwater Coalition and we encourage you to do your part. For stormwater facts and tips on how you can help, visit the Stormwater Coalition of Monroe County's H2O Hero website at www.h2ohero.org. As always, should you have any comments please contact me at bcarpenter@townofpittsford.org or stop in and visit me at Town Hall.