



CITY OF APPLETON

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: July 11, 2024

STATEMENT FROM MAYOR WOODFORD

Flood Impact and Relief Efforts

The City of Appleton is reviewing the flooding incident on July 5, 2024. We understand that these are difficult circumstances for some of our residents and that people are experiencing a range of emotions and difficulties in the aftermath.

Initial findings are preliminary, however, there is no evidence of any blockages within the city's stormwater system that might explain why flooding occurred. Rather, an extreme rainfall event in a short period of time appears to have caused rainfall to run off the ground surface at an exceptionally high rate, resulting in flooding. Rainfall of that magnitude has an approximately one percent chance of occurring in any given year.

The stormwater situation likely has been made worse by a wetter-than-normal spring and early summer, leaving the ground surface saturated and as a result, the historic rainfall event exceeded the ability of the already saturated ground to absorb the water.

The city is organizing opportunities for residents to speak with elected leaders and staff and details will be shared with residents in the coming days. I have personally spoken with many of the affected residents and have affirmed the City of Appleton's intent to continue gathering information and pursuing support from higher levels of government. The Stormwater Utility will continue its longstanding practice of reviewing system engineering and identifying future projects to improve the system, prioritizing interventions in areas of the city where extreme weather can negatively impact neighborhoods.

I have also been in contact with the offices of the County Executive and Governor and have spoken with one of our state representatives. Additionally, I have been reaching out to community philanthropic and volunteer organizations in an effort to organize relief efforts. Unfortunately, like most, if not all municipal governments in Wisconsin, the City of Appleton does not have local disaster relief funding to support individual homeowners. Criteria for obtaining Wisconsin Disaster Relief funding or Federal

Emergency Management Agency assistance will also likely mean this incident will not qualify for available programs. On top of this, many affected homeowners are being informed by their insurance carriers that their losses will not be covered.

Given these terrible circumstances and despite the odds against us, I have submitted a request to the State of Wisconsin for support for individual homeowners who experienced flooding losses. Additionally, the Department of Public Works is conducting a special trash collection, free of charge, for bulk items discarded on the curb in hardest hit areas of the City. I will continue to advocate for help for our residents and remain committed to doing everything we can to support our fellow Appletonians as they recover from this disaster.

To our neighbors, family, and friends who are trying to recover from this devastating situation, we are working hard in trying to get any help we can. Having experienced a major basement flood growing up on Fair Street – I know personally the pain of losing family keepsakes, the fear of the financial impacts, and the difficulty of restoring your home to the way it was before. And I also know the feeling of anxiety rain and storms in the years to come will bring, because I still have those feelings to this day in my own home.

As we learn more about potential opportunities for additional support and resources, we will share those with the community. In the meantime, I ask all residents to consider the ways you might be able to lend a hand to our neighbors in need, and to do what you can to prepare your own home against the potential impacts of extreme weather – including checking on your homeowners' insurance options with your carrier.

Moments like these can bring out the best and the worst in communities, but I sincerely believe that Appletonians will come together to get through this, just as we have in the past.

Thank you.

Jake Woodford
Mayor of Appleton

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