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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Jim Bohl
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Time for City, MMSD to Make Proactive Basement Backup Prevention Effort

Alderman Jim Bohl says it's time for incentives for valves that prevent basement backups, as well as possible mandatory disconnection of downspouts in combined sewer areas

For the third consecutive year, **Alderman Jim Bohl** has been inundated with calls and emails from exasperated property owners whose basements have been flooded after heavy rainstorms. The storms that poured about five inches of rain on Milwaukee and the area late Wednesday and early Thursday spurred the latest occurrence of what has become a frustrating, damaging and all-too-familiar problem in several areas of the city.

Today, Alderman Bohl requested legislation that would provide \$100 rebates to eligible homeowners who install backflow preventer valves in their basement floor drains. He's also calling on the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District to provide a matching preventer valve incentive program, and advancing discussion on creating a requirement that downspouts be disconnected from the system on homes located in areas of Milwaukee and Shorewood with combined sewers.

Funding for the city's portion of such a preventer valve incentive program could come from the city's sewer maintenance fund, which includes money collected as a fee as part of the water bills paid by all city property owners.

"These issues need to be proactively addressed as soon as possible, and it's my sincere wish today that our city Department of Public Works meet with Kevin Shafer and others at MMSD and initiate an incentive program that would help defray costs for homeowners who install backflow preventer valves in their basement floor drains," Alderman Bohl said, noting that other U.S. cities either have such programs or recommend that affected property owners install the valves.

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Basement Backups/ADD ONE

Last year Alderman Bohl requested representatives from the city's Department of Public Works and the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District to appear before the Common Council's Public Works Committee to provide information and answer questions about the large number of flooded basements and sewer back ups that resulted from heavy rains on June 18-19, 2009.

There is a precedent for the rebate incentive program, the alderman said. "The (rebate program) could work like the program offered by MMSD a few years ago that paid homeowners to disconnect downspouts," he said, adding he believes that only property owners who during the past 10 years have submitted insurance claims for basement backup damage, who reported a backup to a government agency, or who could provide other means to substantiate a previous backup occurrence should be eligible to take part in such a program.

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