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As posted on Front Porch Forum May 28, 2021

As we head into Memorial Day weekend, the Water Resources team at Public Works wants to wish everyone a happy summer ahead. We know that warmer weather and sunny Burlington skies go hand in hand with a wonderful day enjoying time recreating at the Lake.

**\*\*Clean Water Resiliency Update\*\***

We want to share an update with you on our work implementing the multi-year Clean Water Resiliency Plan (CWRP). In 2018, the Mayor and DPW proposed an ambitious \$30M proposal to upgrade our wastewater and stormwater infrastructure. Voters supported this measure at over 90%. Even in light of understandably difficult headlines over the years, the City has continued to improve its stewardship of the Lake. We built one of the first treatment plants in the state in 1953, followed by upgrades in the 1970's and again in the 1990's. While records show the City was releasing up to 170M gallons of untreated, not disinfected water as recently as that last upgrade, this no longer happens. While any gallon of untreated water is unacceptable, things have steadily improved and this Plan sets our community up for further success.

- This spring we completed two major projects which we expect will have significant positive impacts on our infrastructure. We completed disinfection upgrades at all 3 wastewater plants and upgraded the central computer and controls system at the Main Wastewater Plant (which handles >70% of our flows).

- We have started a replacement of the Flynn Ave Pump station - which has required emergency repairs in recent years. Pump stations are critical infrastructure in ensuring sewer flows from lower elevation areas are conveyed directly to the treatment plants.

- This summer we will be building 12 raingardens above the Pine St Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) area. This is the most vexing acute water quality challenge we face as a City. This project will reduce and slow down runoff from a significant area of impervious surface above the Pine Street CSO as part of our long term approach to reducing the frequency and volume of overflows into the Pine Barge Canal.

- We are currently awaiting bids to repair additional miles of sewer and storm lines. This effort represents, by far, the largest investment into our sewer/storm lines in recent memory.

- Most of this work has been advanced through the State Revolving Fund - which provides low interest loans. Some of it has been grant funded. This reduces the overall burden on the ratepayer.

- Learn more about the CWRP here: <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/DPW/Water/CWRP>

**\*\*More is planned\*\***

We need to be clear. These projects will make a big difference, but more aging assets need attention and we cannot guarantee there will not be future infrastructure issues. While CSO points in the City are down since a decade ago, climate change and high-intensity storms have driven many of our infrastructure challenges. Climate change isn't going anywhere, but with the above work and with more planned we are building projects with these challenges in mind.

There is other work we are advancing that builds off of the above, such as our Integrated Planning (IP) process. While phosphorus loading in Lake Champlain continues to be a chronic statewide challenge (contributions of phosphorus come from many land use sectors) leading to things like cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) blooms, Burlington is working on its part through IP to meet or exceed its responsibility to protect the Lake. The IP also lays out the next phase of projects aimed at further reducing the combined sewer overflows driven by intense rainfall patterns. You can learn more here: <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/dpw/water/integratedplan>

City Council recently passed our Rate Restructuring and Affordability Plan. This work was designed to ensure a framework for sustainable funding for proactive maintenance and future upgrades as well as to equitably distribute the ratepayer cost. It also includes specific affordability measures to support Burlingtonian's ability to pay for essential, clean, safe water – such as discounted water and sewer charges for income constrained customers. You can learn more here, including how your rates may change: <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/DPW/Water/AffordabilityProject>.

**\*\*Contact Us\*\***

Water quality and rate affordability guide every decision we make. We thank you for your support and look forward to a great summer on the Lake.

Please visit <http://burlingtonvt.gov/construction> for a list of all the work we will be undertaking this year. For any questions, please email [rgoulding@burlingtonvt.gov](mailto:rgoulding@burlingtonvt.gov) or call 802-863-4501. Thank you.