



Work Continues to Assist Southside Flood Victims

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
MARY ROBERTSON, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
816.271.4610 or mrobertson@stjoemo.org**

**(August 24, 2020)
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

It has been one month since flooding ravaged homes on the city's southside creating devastating hardship to many residents and property owners. Volunteers and agencies from around the city mobilized to offer assistance in any way possible. The United Way coordinated agencies' efforts including the American Red Cross, Community Organizations Active in Disasters (COAD), Missouri Baptist Disaster Relief, Church of Christ Disaster Relief, Team Rubicon, Habitat for Humanity, InterServ, CAP St. Joe, AFL-CIO, Valley Mission Center, Keys Foursquare Church, MU Extension, Grace Evangelical, and the Mennonite community. Efforts are ongoing to provide services and resources as those affected continue to rebuild their homes and their lives.

The damage was widespread and immense to many homes, businesses, vehicles and personal property, however not on a scale large enough to be eligible for any state or federal emergency declaration or funding. As many as 200 homes and businesses received some damage to their properties with more than 167 sustaining major damage. The City of St. Joseph stepped in with both financial resources and manpower to help those affected.

The day of the flooding brought an immediate response from multiple city departments. Fire crews assisted with rescuing people from their homes and moving them to higher ground. Police assisted with evacuations and an increased patrol presence in the area. Street and sewer maintenance crews assisted with traffic on water-covered roadways and checked inlets to ensure they were open and taking water. Health department staff assisted with the health and safety of displaced pets. The emergency manager, with the direction of the fire chief, secured temporary sheltering at the Civic Arena for those displaced, arranged for public transportation, and coordinated with the Red Cross to find temporary housing for those who needed it.

Once the waters began to recede, mobilization occurred to identify immediate needs and city resources were secured and dispatched to assist in the areas where needed. Many of the city departments continue to work in the area.

The Public Works and Transportation Department has remained involved in the clean-up effort since the day of the flooding. The street maintenance division started with clearing roads of debris and silt, followed by sweeping and cleaning. Much of their effort has been ditching in the flooded area from Parker Road north. Both sides of Marie have been ditched between Parker and Benjamin; Parker, from just east of Ollmeda west to Marie, on the north side, has been ditched, which included the necessity of building a junction box; Ollmeda from Parker to Andrew, both sides; Ollmeda, from Joseph to Benjamin; and a crew from sewer maintenance have completed both Elijah and Benjamin. Opening the ditches will allow the ditches further to the north to drain. Crews are rebuilding the neighborhood ditches and replacing drain tubes to restore drainage. The four ditching crews have installed 4 crossroad culverts and 29 new driveway culverts. If an existing driveway culvert was in place and in decent shape, it was reset if needed and cleaned. Due to damage from the creek, some longer-term repairs along Parker Road will be undertaken involving sheet-piling, piers and riprap to stabilize the road. It is anticipated some repaving of roads will be necessary due to the heavy equipment working in the area.

The division has expended approximately \$25,000 on the flood recovery to date and has disposed of 225 free loads of debris at the landfill at a valued cost of \$18,909. More significantly, other programs in the division have shut down to reassign staff to the clean-up effort. The permanent asphalt repair and alley repair crew, the concrete repair crew, and the drainage crew have suspended normal operations for the interim. Most of the crews have been working 5 ten-hour days each week since the flood occurred.

The sewer maintenance division has reduced the size of the inlet repair crew and shifted other personnel to accommodate the 3-man crew working as part of this effort. Sewer maintenance crews have checked every inlet south of Alabama and west of Sherman, along with affected areas east of Sherman. Every manhole west of Sherman was pulled to ensure all were clean and flowing as appropriate. Sewer maintenance crews will be in the area repairing three inlets.

The Fire Department assisted with the process of pumping water from basements and clearing mud from parking lots. More than 40 structures were pumped. The emergency manager met with county, state and regional officials to identify agencies and resources available to assist the property owners. The emergency manager was instrumental in securing a declaration through the Small Business Administration for disaster loans for individuals and businesses.

The Fire Department also coordinated the placement and oversight of dumpsters, a critical piece in the clean-up effort. As many as 39 dumpsters were placed in the flooded areas to assist property owners with disposal of flood damaged items and building materials. Ten portable toilets were placed in the area. To date, 275 dumpster loads have been taken to the landfill weighing 727 tons. The city has waived \$23,276 in tipping fees and has spent \$60,650 contracting dumpster services.

The Health Department coordinated several clinics to provide tetanus shots to both residents and crews working in the flooded areas. The health department's staff time and supplies totaled approximately \$2,800 responding to the flooding event.

The Planning and Community Development Department has played a vital role in helping property owners with permitting and inspections, federal funding options, property maintenance and zoning issues. The department is offering no-cost/exempt fee construction permits for all work in the

flooded area. At an owner's request, an inspector will conduct a house inspection to assess any damage caused by the flood. A total of 12 house inspections have been performed. The community development division funded an emergency grant for a collapsed foundation wall at a cost of \$7,000. The neighborhood services coordinator has been assisting residents and city departments with coordination of city resources.

The City is working with residents and property owners in the affected area with regard to utility billing for sewer service during the flood and clean-up period. Credits, to date, total approximately \$11,000.

In the past month, many city employees and significant operational funding have been expended for the clean-up from the flood. To date, the financial budgetary impact to the city's budget is estimated at half a million dollars.

###