

# Board OKs extensive flood mitigation plans

BY STEVE SADIN NEWS-SUN

By the time the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission completes a four-year, \$122 million flood mitigation project funded by the state of Illinois, 6,926 pieces of property and 192 roads will suffer significantly less flood damage in the future.

The Lake County Board unanimously approved a joint resolution with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity on Aug. 13 in Waukegan for flood mitigation projects from Highland Park to Wauconda, and from Zion to North Barrington.

Commission Executive Director Kurt Woolford said after the meeting the resolution covered the second phase of the four-year project for \$30 million for 16 different projects. The first portion approved approximately a year ago for \$30 million is nearing completion.

When the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) first approved the \$122 million last year, Woolford said he began an extensive research project to determine the neediest locations.

“I met with representatives of all 52 municipalities in Lake County and asked them where your major drainage problems are,” Woolford said. “They helped me identify the properties with the biggest drainage problems.”

A year ago, Woolford said 12 projects were chosen in the areas of highest need benefiting 2,818 properties and 139 roads for the first \$30 million. This year’s 16 undertakings will aid 1,605 properties and 122 roads.

Each project has a partner, which can be a municipality or another governmental entity like a drainage district, which will own the project once the commission completes its work.

“They will maintain the project over its life,” Woolford said. “They own the infrastructure. They will maintain it.”

Though these projects in all parts of Lake County will greatly reduce flooding, Woolford said they are not a panacea. The amount of rainfall continues to grow in

the area, as storms become heavier and heavier each year. The floods in July, 2017 were a wakeup call.

“We can’t reduce the rainfall,” Woolford said. “It’s going to increase like it has over the years. These mitigation projects will update the infrastructure so there will be less flooding. We also need nature-based solutions like more trees.”

Partnering with North Chicago on two projects to build the Lewis Avenue Detention Basin for an estimated \$4.25 million, the project will reduce the potential for flood damage for 874 properties and 16 roads, according to county documents.

North Chicago Mayor Leon Rockingham Jr. said the project is a longtime priority. It will help many homes from Green Bay Road east. When done, rainwater will fill the newly built basin and slowly drain it out.

“This is going to help not only the people upstream, but also downstream,” Rockingham said. “In all the houses (there), the pipes were not large enough. When we had a heavy rain, the houses would flood and roads would be impassable.”

The Buffalo Grove area is also getting two projects which will cost approximately \$5 million, impacting 207 properties and 29 roads. One is the Northwood subdivision bounded by Pauline Avenue, the Canadian National Railway tracks, Armstrong Drive and Weiland Road, according to the documents.

Buffalo Grove is working in coordination with Vernon Township for the second Buffalo Grove area project in the Horatio Gardens subdivision, which is near the Northwoods area, according to the documents.

Some enhancements like the 20th Street project in Zion will be done over more than one year. The first phase taking place this year for approximately \$2,500 will design and build upgrades for storm sewers and the drainage system between 20th Street and Kellogg Creek.

Other projects are scheduled to be done over the next year in Wauconda, Kildeer, North Barrington, and Lake Zurich. Lindenhurst, Round Lake Beach, Vernon Hills, Highland Park, Lake Bluff, Lincolnshire and the Four Corners area where Avon, Grant, Fremont and Wauconda townships come together.

Though the county is spending \$30 million in grant funds, Woolford said some partners like Lincolnshire are doing larger projects and paying an additional amount. The additions total \$9.7 million, covered by intergovernmental agreements totaling \$39.7 million in overall work.

For the final two stages, Woolford said he anticipates an additional \$62 million will be spent from the DCEO grant in the third and fourth years impacting 2,502 properties and 192 roads.