

Council takes aim at drainage problem

By Tom Beer
staff writer

The city of Farmington wants its citizens to get their minds in the gutter, especially if they live in the Bel Aire Subdivision.

The subdivision, located south of 10 Mile and west of Orchard Lake roads, contains more than 300 houses, most of mid-1950s vintage. These houses are served by a sanitary sewer system which has been plagued by backups resulting in flooded basements during spring and summer storms.

City officials think they know the reason for the backups — and they think they have a simple solution to the problem.

The sanitary sewer, intended to carry just waste material, becomes overloaded when rain water from a heavy storm enters the system.

Teacher remembered

The record shows that people were always saying and writing nice things about Argent Ray Barnes, an elementary school teacher for most of her adult life.

In June 1950, for example, the principal of a Melvindale school wrote, "Mrs. Barnes is outstanding in character and loyalty, also cooperation. Time means nothing in her work. She likes children and gets along well with them."

When those words were written, Argent Barnes was at an age, 59, when most people are about ready to call it a career. Mrs. Barnes, however, was about to embark on a 17-year stint with the Farmington Public Schools.

She finally retired in 1967 after

Much of the water reaches the sanitary sewer through the following route: along the house roofline, into the gutters and downspouts, through the ground near the houses and into the underground weeping tiles.

Weeping tiles are small drains located about 10 feet underground at the foundations of most houses built in the 1950s. Those drains carry the water directly to the sanitary sewers.

The problem could be solved, city officials believe, if residents would use extender tubes or concrete splash blocks to carry the water at least five feet away from the house and its underground tiles.

"WE THINK that if we can get some cooperation we can improve the situation in a hurry," said Farmington City Manager Bob Deadman after hearing a

report on the matter at last Monday's City Council meeting.

"We're going to survey the entire subdivision and then we may send each house a copy of the survey with the specific recommendation for each house."

City Engineer David Mariner, who composed the report on the Bel Aire problem, said most subdivisions downspouts lacked extenders.

"There are 320 houses in Bel Aire and 90 percent of them have downspouts that go straight down," he said.

This problem's really only in that subdivision," Mariner continued, "but I'd like to see residents all over the city take a look at their gutters and downspouts and extend them if necessary."

What if the residents refuse to do this?

"We really haven't crossed that bridge yet," Deadman said. "We're going to see what kind of voluntary compliance we get."

teaching at Gill and Ten Mile elementary schools, but remained on call as a substitute teacher until 1977.

Mrs. Barnes, a longtime Farmington resident, died July 14 in Farmington's Botsford Hospital. She was 91.

Born in Rochester, N.Y., Mrs. Barnes was a graduate of Western Kentucky Teachers College. She taught in rural and graded schools in rural Ohio County, Ky., for 12 years.

Coming to Detroit in the early 1940s, Mrs. Barnes taught English to foreign-born students at Detroit's Southeastern High School as well as special education and elementary classes in Melvindale.

Survivors include two daughters, Pauline Corredine and Margaret Boswell; a brother, Edward Shultz; seven grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

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