

## **White Lake Homeowner Needs Answers from Oakland County Road Commission on Inferior Storm Drain**

*By Right Now Marketing Group, LLC*

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*The storm drain by the street has been plugged since the snow melted last spring; ground water has no place to go but into the crawl spaces under homes*

White Lake, MI – Susan Downey purchased her home in June of 2008 after looking at nearly 40 houses for sale. She started out looking at bank owned homes trying to get a great deal; however there were a variety of problems with many of the houses that the single homeowner did not want to deal with. “She was looking at small, single story homes without a basement,” said Ralph Maupin, her real estate agent. “Her main concern was that the crawl space be dry because she is very sensitive to mold. Some of the homes we looked at had wet crawl spaces and we knew it the moment we entered the homes. She was wheezing by the time we left these homes.”

After spending 3 months looking at homes Susan finally began looking at private owned homes being sold at retail prices. “We found a nice 3 bedroom ranch on Lindholm Street in White Lake Township,” said Ralph. “We made an offer, subject to a satisfactory inspection of the home and crawl space. The crawl space appeared to be dry with no sign of mold. The owner claimed that he never had a problem with water in the crawl space.”

There is a ditch with a catch basin that serves as a storm drain in front of several of the homes on Lindholm Street. At first there was no problem; the ditch stayed dry and Susan was able to cut the grass; even in the lowest spots. In the Fall of 2008 the ditch started holding water; it did not drain away. When Susan went to pay her property tax bill at the Township offices, she asked them who was responsible for maintaining the storm drain; they gave her the phone number to the Oakland County Road Commission. She called them and assumed they fixed the problem because the water level went down.

In the spring of 2009, after all the snow melted, the ditch was full of water; almost to the top. At this time, there was just a small amount of moisture in the crawl space. This time Susan had to make numerous calls to the Oakland County Road Commission to get them to come out. They finally came, in May, just before the Memorial Day Weekend and pumped some water out; however, the water table was so high that it kept filling up again. By this time, there was about 4 inches of standing water in the crawl space and Susan was suffering from asthma attacks at night due to the excess moisture. “I’ve known Susan for over 20 years; she was my full-time bookkeeper for 16 years and she never took even one sick day off! She doesn’t even catch colds or the flu when a nasty virus is going around the office,” said Ralph Maupin. “She assumed she had outgrown her allergy and asthma problems until this happened.”

The Oakland County Road Commission gave up on the problem after removing some of the water and put a hideous looking plastic orange fence around the center of the ditch where the water level was over 3 feet deep. Susan thought this meant that they would be back soon to fix the problem. “I gave them the benefit of the doubt, thinking they were going “back to the drawing board” to have a meeting and make a plan,” said Susan. “When I called them again in the middle of June, I was shocked at their answer. The person who answered the phone said, “The fence is a safety precaution and we just have to hope for a dry summer so the water goes away. What kind of answer is this? My crawl space is full of water. I’ve had waterproofing contractors out to inspect and give me an estimate on putting in a drain system and sump pump, but they said there is no place for the water to go unless the Road Commission fixes the storm drain. The pump will run continuously and I’ll be replacing it every year as it burns up. I’m sure it would also run

up my electric bills too.”

The next step was to call Jim Runestad, the County Commissioner assigned to the White Lake area. “I came over to Susan’s house on June 22nd and we called him together,” said Ralph. “He was nice; he listened to our concerns and he really seemed to care. He said he would call the Oakland County Road Commission to see what was going on.”

On June 23rd, Susan received a call from the Oakland County Road Commission. “They gave me the same (scripted) answer that they gave me the first couple times I called them,” said Susan. “The girl who called said ‘I will put in a report and someone will call you in a couple days.’” “No one from the Oakland County Road Commission has called me back yet,” said Susan. “I’m not surprised!”

On June 25th Jim Runestad called Susan; she missed the call but he left a message saying he wanted to confirm that the Oakland County Road Commission did come out and fix the problem. “I received his message after 5pm, so I called him back the next day to tell him nothing had been done,” said Susan. “He said to call him back on Tuesday, June 30th.”

On June 26th, after speaking to Jim Runestad, Susan emailed him pictures of the standing water. When she called him back Tuesday morning, there was no answer, so she left a message. “I called again later in the afternoon and left another message. At this point, I was afraid he was blowing me off too,” said Susan.

On July 1st, Jim Runestad called Susan and explained that he had a hectic day Tuesday but that he was working on getting the problem resolved. He said he spoke to the Oakland County Road Commission and they were “putting her report at the top of the stack.” Jim told Susan to call him back on Thursday, July 2nd to let him know if the problem gets resolved or not. Jim also spoke about the Oakland County Road Commission being under staffed and overwhelmed with roads to maintain and having no funding to hire more people.

Susan is still having problems sleeping and breathing at night. Her front yard is soft and spongy, the crawl space is full of water and no one seems to be able to help with the problem. She has created a blog with pictures and articles about her concerns about living with water under her house. Susan would appreciate it if people would visit her blog and make comments and suggestions as to what she can do to get the problem resolved. Visit Susan’s blog at <http://oaklandcountyroadcommission.blogspot.com/>

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