

January 17, 2020

Mr. Steve Bohnel
The Frederick News-Post
351 Ballenger Center Drive
Frederick, Maryland 21701

VIA E-MAIL ONLY
sbohnel@newspost.com

Re: Public Information Act Request

Dear Mr. Bohnel:

Attached please find documents responsive to your December 10, 2019, Public Information Act request directed to the Town of Emmitsburg which you narrowed via email December 30, 2019.

Please contact me if you have any questions regarding this response.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Leslie A. Powell
Counsel for the Town of Emmitsburg

LAP/ecr
Attachment
cc: Town of Emmitsburg

Terri Ray

From: Cathy Willets
Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020 11:10 AM
To: Terri Ray
Subject: FW: provincial house

From: Dan Fissel <DFissel@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 14, 2020 4:03 PM
To: Cathy Willets <CWillets@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Subject: FW: provincial house

From: Cathy Willets
Sent: Tuesday, October 29, 2019 4:16 PM
To: Dan Fissel <DFissel@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Subject: provincial house

Did they give us notice of their flushing?

Cathy Willets
Town Manager
Town of Emmitsburg
300A South Seton Ave.
Emmitsburg, MD 21727
301-600-6300
www.emmitsburgmd.gov

Terri Ray

From: Cathy Willets
Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020 11:12 AM
To: Terri Ray
Subject: FW: provincial house

From: Dan Fissel <DFissel@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 30, 2019 10:18 AM
To: Cathy Willets <CWillets@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Subject: RE: provincial house

Yes I spoke with Dennis and told him it should be OK but never expected the problems, we normally do not have any complaints when they flush.

Dan

From: Cathy Willets
Sent: Tuesday, October 29, 2019 4:16 PM
To: Dan Fissel <DFissel@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Subject: provincial house

Did they give us notice of their flushing?

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Terri Ray

From: Cathy Willets
Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020 11:10 AM
To: Terri Ray
Subject: FW: Hydrant Flushing

From: Dan Fissel <DFissel@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 14, 2020 4:03 PM
To: Cathy Willets <CWillets@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Subject: FW: Hydrant Flushing

From: Cathy Willets
Sent: Wednesday, October 30, 2019 11:16 AM
To: Dan Fissel <DFissel@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Subject: RE: Hydrant Flushing

Cost of installing blow off valves?

From: Dan Fissel <DFissel@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 30, 2019 11:02 AM
To: Cathy Willets <CWillets@emmitsburgmd.gov>; Jim Click <JClick@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Subject: RE: Hydrant Flushing

Hi Cathy, I did not imply any of what she said about "not my problem ". I still cannot see how mud can get into her appliances and still do not believe that this is what it really is! The Brookfield/Pembroke Developments are fed off of the 10" prior to the Pressure reducer valve on Frailey Road. This high pressure line then goes over to the Pressure Reducer station just off of Timbermill Run Rd. This may be why they are susceptible to a little more RUST coloring than the rest of the Town or why it does not clear up as quickly. The line coming down the mountain from the water plant has one hydrant at the edge of town on Frailey Rd. I flushed this line for a full hour and a half. We may want to consider putting a couple of blow offs down the line, as this is a long way to pull the rust out. It is up to the Town whether they want to test the water and I did not tell her we are not going to test it. I simply stated to her that she needs to write a letter to the Town to state her concerns as I relayed to you and the Mayor yesterday afternoon. I told her that I probably would not drink it until it clears up. You could but it is not aesthetically pleasing. I cannot help that some of these water lines are probably over 100 years old, and have tubacles inside from years of lack of proper corrosion control prior to my taking over this position.

Dan

From: Cathy Willets
Sent: Wednesday, October 30, 2019 10:05 AM
To: Dan Fissel <DFissel@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Subject: FW: Hydrant Flushing

FYI

From: Emily Austill <EAustill@crs75.org>
Sent: Wednesday, October 30, 2019 10:03 AM
To: Cathy Willets <CWillets@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Subject: Re: Hydrant Flushing

Good Morning,

Yes, while I understand that hydrant flushing is important, I do not understand why the sediment is hitting the Brookfield/Pembrook neighborhood the hardest. I have spoke with other residents of the town that have all stated that they have not had the discoloration of their water during these hydrant flushes. At this point in time, the sediment has ruined multiple White fire department uniforms and bedding with no warning. We are running our water to clear the lines of the house and causing a significant increase in our water bill. We are also starting to worry about the safety of the town water and the damage it is doing to our appliances.

After speaking with the male in charge of the maintenance for the town, this issues does not seem to concern the town or officials of the town. We were told yesterday that the town would not be testing our water and give the attitude of "not my problem, deal with it." This seems to be a huge issue in our development and it isn't just the twice a year as you stated, it is happening several times during the year.

I resided in Thurmont for 14 years before moving to Emmitsburg. We never once had these issues with the water and we had multiple hydrants located in our court that were flushed.

At this point, I need a better answer than the hydrants being flushed as to why the water is turning brown and we have mud(not iron sediment) in our washer. The safety of the water is in question and I'm hoping that the town steps up and takes the time and effort to reassure the residents that it is safe with water test results and looks into why our neighborhood is being affected the hardest.

Thank you,
Emily Austill

Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 30, 2019, at 9:33 AM, Cathy Willets <CWillets@emmitsburgmd.gov> wrote:

Good morning,

I am replying to an email you sent to Frederick County. The Town of Emmitsburg currently flushes their water lines through the fire hydrants twice a year to remove naturally occurring minerals and sediment that settle within the water mains. The goal is to ensure water quality is maintained at its optimal level and to properly maintain the town's water distribution lines. It is critical to the maintenance of water quality and your water system. All municipalities that have their own water systems flush their lines. The amount of pressure disruption and discoloration of water depends a lot on the age of the lines and material used.

The Town last flushed the lines in April 2019. The Provincial House which is a large water user flushed their own hydrants last week which disrupted the entire system in Town. Typically, the Provincial House will flush after the Town so there isn't further discoloration or disruption. Unfortunately, since you have only resided in Town for less than a year you have experienced three hydrant flushings.

Notification of this recent flushing was posted to our website on Friday, October 25th, posted to Channel 99 on Friday, October 25th, posted to Facebook on Sunday, October 27th, and then anyone who has signed up for ALERT Frederick received text messages and emails on Sunday, October 27th. I apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused but it is a program/practice the Town must continue if we are to provide optimal water quality and protect our water lines.

Cathy Willets
Town Manager
Town of Emmitsburg
300A South Seton Ave.
Emmitsburg, MD 21727
301-600-6300
www.emmitsburgmd.gov

Good Afternoon,

I am reaching out as a last ditched effort for some assistance. My name is Emily Austill and I currently reside in Emmitsburg, MD. We are new to Emmitsburg, with only being here for less than a year. We are having issues with our water turning brown multiple times a year and without warning. I have reached out to the town of Emmitsburg and I have received the "it's not our problem" attitude with response of that it is fire hydrants flushing (only happens 2 times a year) and this is our 5 time in less than a year. Both my uniform and my husband's fire department uniforms and bedding have been ruined with the water condition. I am starting to be concerned about health safety for our family and our appliance safety.

I am hoping that someone else higher up has a better explanation as to what is actually going on. I resided in Thurmont for 14 years before moving here and never had these issues.

Thank you,
Emily Austill

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Terri Ray

From: Cathy Willets
Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020 11:12 AM
To: Terri Ray
Subject: FW: fb & website

From: Cathy Willets
Sent: Thursday, November 07, 2019 4:17 PM
To: Terri Ray <TRay@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Subject: fb & website

Can you also post this on website please?

In response to the brown water complaints in the Town, town staff has responded to several complaints. If you are still experiencing problems, please contact the Town Office DIRECTLY (301-600-6300) so we can investigate your complaint and have a record of what area(s) are experiencing problems.

A series of events led up to the influx of brown water complaints. The Provincial House in Emmitsburg typically flushes their lines/hydrants after the Town completes town wide flushing. Unfortunately, the Provincial House flushed the week prior to the Town, causing brown water complaints. In an effort to clear up the brown water, the Town proceeded with hydrant flushing the following week. Due to the lack of rain and demand on water treatment plant, the amount of water staff was able to flush out the lines was less than usual leaving some natural sediment and minerals behind. This has caused the brown water to linger longer than usual. Things are settling out.

All of the Town's water quality reports can be found on the website. The Town remains in compliance with all MDE requirements.

Again, please contact the Town Office directly if you have any questions, concerns or comments.

Cathy Willets
Town Manager
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Terri Ray

From: Cathy Willets
Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020 11:11 AM
To: Terri Ray
Subject: FW: clip on Emmitsburg drinking water, fyi

From: Dan Fissel <DFissel@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 14, 2020 4:22 PM
To: Cathy Willets <CWillets@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Subject: FW: clip on Emmitsburg drinking water, fyi

From: Dan Fissel
Sent: Friday, December 6, 2019 1:21 PM
To: Zoe Goodson -MDE- <zoe.goodson@maryland.gov>
Cc: Jim Click <JClick@emmitsburgmd.gov>; Cathy Willets <CWillets@emmitsburgmd.gov>; Mayor Briggs <MayorBriggs@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Subject: RE: clip on Emmitsburg drinking water, fyi

Hi Zoe, in response to this email:

In October 15th I gave permission to the Provincial house to flush their hydrants a little earlier than normal, This has not affected us in the past but this time it did. We had several brown water complaints. Our system was set for flushing Oct. 28th.

On October 21st There was a water leak that was repaired by staff on the Waynesboro pike 2" line.

A local contractor was filling up a hydro seeder this same morning and pulled from a hydrant , both of these incidents stirred up the system again.

The Town Staff flushed hydrants starting on Oct. 28th,29th,30th,31st and continued on Nov 1st 4th and 5th until they were completed. This seemed particularly long to me but they seemed dirty this time so some extra time was spent on the flushing and by starting and stopping I do not believe that the dirt/rust and sediment moved as well as we would have liked it to. Some of our Staff was called off the flushing for several other duties that needed to be done, so the continuous water movement was interrupted occasionally. We had several complaints from then until around 2 weeks afterwards. Town Manager , DPW and myself discussed this problem and decided to add a blow off half way down the mountain to help flush this line as it is a long line with no flushing points, except at the edge of Town, this will be flushed quarterly.

Nov 8th Mountaineers way Same resident as on the 19th Mr Ball complaining about brown water and low pressure. Staff went out and checked his lateral for leaks flushed the line inside his house prior to meter, replaced meter and checked all his toilets for leaks.

November 19th, on Mountaineers way Mr Ball was very unhappy and very vocal on facebook continually, so I checked the turbidity 4.6 NTU's and chlorine 1.1 Mg/L residual at the hydrant and deemed that the line needed to be re-flushed. I lightly opened the Hydrant (200 GPM's and grabbed a turbidity .9NTU's and chlorine 1.1Mg/L) I flushed the Hydrant until the Turbidity was a .46 NTU's Chlorine remained the same. The PH level was a 7.9 SSU at this time. I then went across town into Wheatly circle were we had another complaint and pulled on another hydrant for a turbidity reading and it was a .34 NTU's Chlorine level at 1.1 also. The PH was the same at 7.9 SSU's.

Nov 20th staff went to Mr ball's residence and checked the Turbidity .41 NTU's and a chlorine residual 1.1 Mg/L and a PH of 8.0 SSU's. We watched Mr Ball get his dirty water sample and he back flushed his filter into a 5 gallon bucket and this

is the water he is showing every one. All week Mr Ball beating us up on face book and had the whole Town terrified of the water.

Nov 21st The town staff grabbed P & A samples from various points around town and sent to Catoctan labs. All came back negative and safe. Mr Ball still not happy and says we are hiding something and it was arranged to grab samples from his house.

Nov27th Grabbed 2 P & A samples from Mr Balls house . one before filter CL2 level at 1.1 Mg/L and bathroom sink CL2 level .3 Mg/L both PH at 8.0 SSU's. Samples came back negative and safe. He know does not believe the lead and copper results that the Town sampled in September of 2019 as he thinks he needs a lead and copper at his house. His house does not meet the criteria as it was built after 1985 and he has PVC piping, He then proceeded to call the mayor a liar and called the Catoctan Labs to see what samples the Town paid for?

We have had our last complaint on November 27th and I called them back and they never returned my call, No one has called the office since then regarding dirty water. We now have heard that an investigative reporter is offering to have the residents water tested, if they have a professional pull the samples I'm OK with this however if the residents pull the samples I will consider them invalid.

There was a string of events that did seem to prolong the water complaints however I believe we are getting back to normal. All of our parameters at the water plant are normal and stable. Attached is the water complaint log. There are several on the log that were all contacted.

If you need anything else please let me know

From: Zoe Goodson -MDE- [<mailto:zoe.goodson@maryland.gov>]

Sent: Friday, December 6, 2019 10:11 AM

To: Dan Fissel <DFissel@emmitsburgmd.gov>

Subject: Re: clip on Emmitsburg drinking water, fyi

Dan,

We spoke on this issue a few weeks ago. Are there people who still have brown water; have you gotten recent complaints?

Please send me back a **written incident report**. It should include a description of the problem (flushing out of sequence, etc), complaints and how the issue has been resolved **or** if issues/complaints are ongoing.

thanks,

Zoë

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Jay Apperson -MDE- <jay.apperson@maryland.gov>

Date: Tue, Dec 3, 2019 at 11:13 AM

Subject: clip on Emmitsburg drinking water, fyi

To: Saeid Kasraei -MDE- <saeid.kasraei@maryland.gov>, Alex McNamee -MDE- <alex.mcnamee@maryland.gov>

https://www.fredericknewspost.com/news/politics_and_government/levels_of_government/municipal/as-some-still-have-brown-water-emmitsburg-officials-urge-them/article_e1b25d6a-fa25-5860-a042-559728786300.html

Jay Apperson

Deputy Director, Office of Communications
Maryland Department of the Environment
410-537-3003
443-604-0091 (mobile)

Zoë Goodson
Water Supply Program
Maryland Department of the Environment
1800 Washington Blvd
Baltimore, MD 21230
410-537-3476

[Click here](#) to complete a three question customer experience survey.

Terri Ray

From: Cathy Willets
Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020 11:12 AM
To: Terri Ray
Subject: FW: please review

Importance: High

From: Cathy Willets
Sent: Monday, December 09, 2019 3:29 PM
To: Tim O'Donnell <TODonnell@emmitsburgmd.gov>; TJ Burns <tburns@emmitsburgmd.gov>; Frank Davis <fdavis@emmitsburgmd.gov>; Cliff Sweeney <CSweeney@emmitsburgmd.gov>; Joe Ritz III <JRitz@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Cc: Mayor Briggs <MayorBriggs@emmitsburgmd.gov>
Subject: please review
Importance: High

Good afternoon,

I wanted to give everyone an update on what staff has been doing. I would like to post an update tomorrow on the website and facebook, but I wanted to give you the opportunity to review it beforehand.

I am leaving today at 3:30 but if you have any questions please email me and I will get back to you as soon as possible. I will be back in tomorrow morning.

Results from 12/9/19 Water Meeting

What we are planning to do in the very near future:

1. Install a blow off valve on Riffle Road. Staff has already been gathering prices and will have it installed as soon as possible. The blow off valve will be about halfway down the mountain line so it will help clear any sediment built up and will make the flushing of Frailey Road hydrant more effective.
2. Start flushing the blow off valve at Riffle Road quarterly.
3. Start flushing hydrant at Frailey Rd. quarterly.
4. Start flushing hydrant on Timbermill Rd. quarterly. (see below).
5. Leak detection specialist is scheduled (no date yet) to come perform bi-annual leak detection services throughout the Town, however he will focus on problem areas first. The leak detection specialist has been contracted by the Town for the last several years to listen to lines throughout Town to determine if there are leaks. He listens to the valves on the Town's main and/or curb stops. If he hears a noise which indicates a possible leak, he will investigate further until he determines a location. He has been very successful in the past. He does not go on private property and won't stop in front of everyone's homes. (just wanted to clarify)
6. RFP is going out for engineering services for new clarifier at water treatment plant. A new clarifier will help maintain the levels in the storage tank so that additional flushings will not burden the water plant and assist in maintaining capacity.
7. Staff has asked for everyone who wishes to participate in being a part of the solution to officially report discolored water, clear water or any ongoing issues over the past 3-6 weeks. This will help staff pinpoint locations.

Notes:

1. Brookfield water line splits off from the hydrant at Frailey Rd. goes down through the alley, across West Main Street and out. At some point the line then goes up hill. There may be a dip in the line that is allowing sediment to collect. Flushing the hydrant at Timbermill quarterly (at least for now) may help alleviate some problems.
2. Issues from Friday (12/6) through weekend can be attributed to two water spikes in the system.
 - a. 12/6 for 45 minutes (3:30-4:15am) increased flow to 60gpm instead of average 30-40gpm.
 - b. 12/6 for 45 minutes (9:15am-10:00am) which brought the flows up to 400 gpm instead of average under 200 gpm.
 - c. 12/5 water spike from 12:30am – 1:00am (unknown flow at this point).

Cathy

Cathy Willets
Town Manager
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