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City not ready to lay blame for sewage flood

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OTTAWA - Dozens of Kanata homeowners grilled city officials Monday about why raw sewage flooded their basements two weeks ago, but could not get the answer they wanted.

The liquid health hazard made its way into about 40 basements in the Brook Drive area, including the Brookside Manor seniors residence. It was a result of record rainfall brought on by the remnants of hurricane Frances.

At a meeting convened by Coun. Peggy Feltmate, more than 100 residents crowded into St. John's Anglican Church, looking for someone to blame.

City officials began with a basic engineering lesson, illustrating how the local March Road pumping station works. Then they outlined the chronology of events from the record rainfall to their current efforts.

City staff said the system's failure was caused by water accumulating around the pumping station. It was a result, they said, of a temporary construction driveway on private land that did not provide sufficient drainage.

The flood caused the pumping station to turn itself off, leaving the sewage to back up into residents' basements.

The city has removed the driveway, but there was no answer to the main question people were asking.

"Who put that culvert in? And I hope you find the answers to that question, because we are damn mad," said one resident.

David McCartney, the city's manager of waste water and drainage services, said it's too early in the investigation to go pointing fingers at anybody.

Homeowners also complained about poor reaction time and misleading information from the public health department. City officials promised they would take residents' complaints back to city hall with them.

Coun. Feltmate agreed to arrange another community meeting when there are more answers available.

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