

# IOWA RIVER cleanup Friday

The City of Iowa Falls is inviting the public to participate in a river cleanup this week. Anyone who wants to help with the cleanup is asked to meet at Fitz Riverbend Park on Cedar Street at 9 a.m. on Friday, Nov. 22. It will be a volunteer group with assistance from some city crews. The group will pick up any debris it finds in and along the river channel. The river has been lowered this month to facilitate work at the hydroelectric dam in town. The group will also attempt to cut up some of the larger trees in the river to make them easier to remove. If you plan to help, you're asked to call ahead to City Hall at 641-648-2527, or just show up on Friday morning. ■

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## Eldora Council approves sump pump inspections

BY MATTHEW REZAB | mrezab@iafalls.com

At least 1,100 Eldora residences and businesses will be forced to have their sump pumps inspected beginning next spring in an effort to save money on water treatment.

The pumps will be inspected to determine whether they are connected to the sanitary sewer line. If so, they must be rerouted elsewhere, preferably into the storm sewer. Water from the sanitary sewer line is routed to the water treatment plant, while storm sewer water is not.

The City Council voted 4-1 on Nov. 12 to hire WHKS & Co. to inspect properties at an estimated cost of \$68,800. The theory is that it's costing the City an unknown amount of money — in the form of equipment wear and tear, man hours and electricity — to treat “clean” water.



Haskin

Eldora Public Works Director Kelly Haskin said he believes it's more efficient for WHKS & Co. to conduct the inspections as opposed to his department because of experience and logistics.

“Originally, I was hoping we could do it in-house, but after five years now it's not going to happen,” he said. “They organize the inspections. They schedule the appointments, which is the most difficult thing. They do everything.”

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## SUMP PUMP

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Haskin said the inspections are the first step in understanding how much extra water is being treated and where it's coming from. He added

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that it is difficult to know just how much money the City will save as a result of the inspections because of two major factors.

First, a sump pump can be capable of pumping anywhere from 20 to 120 gallons of water per minute depending on its specifications. Second, WHKS told Haskin that on average 10 percent of homes and businesses have an "illegal" hookup, but that number can vary. Haskin said the sanitary sewer lines can handle about 400 gallons per minute.

"If you have three or four sump pumps on one block, that's pretty much your whole capacity there," Haskin said. "We have spots in town where it does start to back up because it gets overloaded."

The Iowa DNR re-

quires cities to reduce the inflow and infiltration in the sanitary sewer system, which causes overflows of untreated wastewater into streams, ponds and the Iowa River.

The inspections will not start until spring because the company also does an exterior inspection, which requires the ground to be free of snow and ice.

Haskin said there is a fairly easy fix for sump pumps that are hooked up to the sanitary sewer, in most cases at a cost of around \$40 for materials, which the owner would be responsible for.

"A lot of times it's just a flexible hose going into the drain or tied into the sewer pipe," he said. "All they have to do is hard plumb it to the outside and then they can use flexible pipe outside and

move it wherever they want."

City Administrator Dave Mitchell said he hopes the inflow and infiltration of the sanitary sewer line can be reduced by as much as 10 percent through the inspections. City code calls for a \$100 monthly surcharge to be imposed on the water bill of anyone who refuses property inspection or does not fix non-compliant sump pumps within 30 days of inspection.

Councilman Bob John said he's in favor of the measure because it will save the City money in the long run, and the sooner it's done, the better.

"We've been after it for five years and it's still not done," he said. "It could still be another five years if we don't get it done now."

WHKS & Co. offers inspections until 7 p.m. and on weekends, Haskin said. Appointments will be available for schedule on the company's website and informational pub-

lic meetings will be held at some point before inspections begin. Property owners will also be contacted by mail with information about the project. Eldora will be divided into four quadrants to be inspected one at a time.

Councilman Aaron Budweg was the sole vote of dissent. He said he had no problem hiring WHKS & Co., but he wanted more financial information before he could vote in favor of the measure.

"If we're spending that kind of money I'd like to have some sort of business (proposal) showing when we can expect to have that return on investment," Budweg said.

Haskin reiterated that an exact savings amount is impossible to predict until the city knows how many sump pumps are "illegal" and how much water they're pumping into the sanitary sewer. Essentially, he can't know until the inspections are completed.

"We know it's going

to save money, bottom line," Haskin said. "It might take five years or 10 years for it to pay for itself. It's unfair to try to say exactly right now. The DNR requires it and we've (been trying) for five years."

A similar program was enacted in Iowa Falls in the summer of 2010 in which property owners also faced a \$100 surcharge on their water bills if they refused inspection or to fix the problem if the pump was attached to the sanitary sewer. WHKS & Co. also performed the inspections in Iowa Falls.

Chapter 100 of Eldora City Code outlines all sump pump and groundwater standards for residents. Ordinance 100.4 reads, "Property owners shall allow a City employee or a designated representative, satisfactory to the City, to inspect the building to confirm and document that there is no sump pump or other prohibited discharge into the wastewater collection system." ■

## CONSIGNMENT AUCTION

MON., NOVEMBER 25, 2019 • 4 P.M.

Appliances, Furniture, Power & Hand Tools, Antiques & Collectibles

Sale to be held at Adams Bros. Auction House, Henderson St., Iowa Falls, IA  
Inspection after 8 AM Sale Day.