



Notes from Ada Township Meeting at the ACA Pond

Monday, April 12, 2021 • Notes by Eric Piehl

BACKGROUND

This section built from notes I took on what I heard from Steve Groenenboom (engineer from Moore & Bruggink), and Justin Suchy (Ada Twp Manager). [My observations appear in these square-brackets.]

Our roads are supposed to be 30' wide, or 15' each side of the centerline.

Our watermains are supposed to be 19' off the centerline of the road (or 4' off the road edge), 6' down from the surface, on the *north* side of E-W streets, or on the *west* side of N-S streets.

Our old watermains were built of cast iron, and break a lot [like it were ceramic] when the ground moves, sometimes in the deep of winter [like in front of 6067 Huntington a few winters ago, causing lots of money for emergency repairs -- emergency timing, big crews, digging a big hole in the ground, often during terrible weather, hoping to fix it.]

Ada Twp has contracted to put in new watermains built of ductile iron [bends some before it breaks, which should be more resilient to ground movement and temperature changes.] The new watermains are supposed to be 26' off the centerline of the road (or 11' off the road edge), or 7' house-ward from the old watermain. Also 6' down from the surface.

The right-of-way for our streets are 33' from the centerline, making the new watermain 7' within that.

To put in the new watermains, Ada Twp has contracted to have a trench built along their routes, including across driveways (half at a time, leaving half your driveway half-operative at all times), on that side of the street. As above, on the north side of E-W streets, or on the west side of N-S streets. [To verify, (A) look for fire hydrants -- they will be on the watermain side of street, and (B) look for *blue* Miss Dig flags indicating water, ignoring flags for individual service lines, from the mains to our houses.]

The contractor will start work away from main entrances [out in the cul-de-sacs?], working toward the main entrances, so as they repair the roads, they have no further reason to run heavy trucks down those roads.

[When both watermains are in place, full of water, a contractor will swap over each house to the new main, presumably taking over that house's copper service line, street-ward from our existing water shutoff valves in our lawns.]

[After everyone's service lines are swapped over to the new watermains and functioning, presumably the contractor will (?) disconnect the old watermain from its water source and (?) leave it in place in the ground?]

All *other* utilities -- electricity and natural gas -- are supposed to be on the side of the street *other* than the watermain. That would be the opposite of the above: on the *south* side of E-W streets, or on the *east* side of N-S streets. [We will come back to this in ALTERNATIVE 3.]



To confirm any of this, can look for:

- *Fire hydrants*, on the side of road with watermain. Each house hooks up to this watermain via an underground copper "service line", which also goes through your shutoff valve in the middle of your driveway or lawn. Thus, about half of these service lines run under the street to get to the main on the other side of the road. [Maybe 2 fire hydrants on a short block, or 3 on a long block.]
- *Electrical transformer boxes*, on the side of road with the electrical main. Each house hooks up to its local electrical transformer box via an underground "service line". Thus, about half of these service lines run under the street to get to the main on the other side of the road. [Up to 8 homes connect to each electrical transformer box. Seems to always be the closest box.]
- Miss Dig flags (present or in photographs). Blue = municipal water (Ada Twp). Red = electricity (Consumers Energy). Yellow = natural gas (DTE). Orange = communications (ATT & Comcast).
- Utility maps at Ada Twp.

REGARDING THE THREE NORWAY SPRUCE _PICEA ABIES_ ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE POND

Some people want to save these trees. Living on the other side of the hill, I don't have an specific opinion on the matter. But people I know in the area of the trees speak very passionately in favor of keeping the trees, and I support them.

Another attendee of the meeting wants the twp to cut down these trees, so that ACA never has to cut them down in the future, theoretically causing his HOA rates to go up. [In 30 years, by a nickel?] I reject this argument as being overly-tenuous, and the speaker does not live in the immediate area to enjoy the trees.

The trees are Norway spruce _Picea abies_, native to Europe. I wish they were natives, such as our eastern white pine _Pinus strobus_, but they are not. On the other hand, the trees are grand, cool-looking, and not a nuisance in any way. And the people nearby love them.

STEVE GROENENBOOM

While I like Steve, and he does know the technology, he misled us on several things:

- Steve said the extra cost of Alternative 1 below is for the extra copper to go around the trees. He is obviously wrong -- this whole project is to put in new watermains made of ductile iron, and not service lines (the lines to our individual houses) made of copper. A trivial point, which I didn't bother to point out at the time.
- A couple other issues I thought at the time were too minor to write down.
- Possible misleading about the cost of ALTERNATIVE 2 below.
- "The [Kent County] Road Commission will not allow the watermain be put on the side of the street with the other utilities." Clearly wrong, as I point out below in ALTERNATIVE 3 below.
- Toward the end of the meeting, kept steering the conversation toward who stays where in Florida, instead of sticking to the topic at hand.

From this, I infer:

- Steve's job is not to serve us in our neighborhood.
- Steve's job is to get the project done.

I shall treat him as Ronald Regan treated the Russians, "Trust, but verify."



NEXT STEPS: BASELINE PLAN

We do nothing. Ada Twp lets a contract to have the three Norway spruce *Picea abies* cut down and chipped. The new watermain is put through at that location.

Advantage: Easy.

Disadvantage: We lose our three big spruce, which kinda anchor that section of our neighborhood. They are replaced with nothing.

NEXT STEPS: ALTERNATIVE 1

The ACA board changes its bylaws to allow _____. Then we ask Ada Twp to route the new (ductile iron) watermain through the grass area, preferably outside of the trees' driplines (the probable extent of their roots).

Advantages: We keep our three big spruce, which kinda anchor that section of our neighborhood.

Disadvantage: We have a trench built across our pond park. On the other hand, it will be restored by contractor.

NEXT STEPS: ALTERNATIVE 2

Amend the project to, for the 100' or so that would have gone under the trees, put a temporary water main along the surface, perhaps even around the trees, then dig up the old main and put the newer permanent main in its place, then disconnect the temporary line.

Advantages: We keep our three big spruce, which kinda anchor that section of our neighborhood.

Disadvantage: Money, according to Steve Groenenboom. But how much money? Remember, they no longer have to spend \$3,000 to take down the trees. I believe Steve was trying to get this alternative to go away, to avoid adding complexity to his project.

NEXT STEPS: ALTERNATIVE 3

Ask Ada Twp to amend the project, and the Kent County Road Commission to allow the new watermain to be placed on the south side of Dumbarton St, for the one very-short block east of Marbury Dr, avoiding the three trees.

Advantages: That puts the new watermain on the side of road *with* four houses, versus *no* houses. Thus making all residential hookups short, not having to run under the street, versus all long, running under the street.

Disadvantage: Steve Groenenboom said the Kent County Road Commission is *very unlikely* to allow this, as it violates their rule against putting watermains with the other utilities. However, ...

The Kent County Road Commission, if it has such a rule, *already heavily violated these rules*. *In our neighborhood.*



Of the 8 blocks I just walked today, 4 or 5 blocks *violate this rule:*

- Adaway Ave from Winthrop Ct to Huntington Dr -- electrical and water *both* on the north side.
- Adaway Ave from Hunting Dr to Buttondown Ct -- electrical and water *both* on the west side.
- Adaway Ave from Buttondown Ct to Adaway Ct -- electrical and water *both* on the west side.
- Adacraft Dr from the west end to Adaway Ave -- electrical and water *both* on the north side. The through streets?
- Adaway Ave from Adaway Ct to Adacraft Dr -- water is on the west side, but I will have to check again the electrical.
- [The through-streets all or mostly violate this rule?]

Only 3 blocks are in accordance with this rule:

- Adaway Ct.
- Huntington Dr.
- Winthrop Ct.
- [Only the three cul-de-sacs are in compliance?]

This includes *in front of my house*, where I can show you photos and on-the-ground evidence that, the electrical mains (both original and new), and water mains are both on my *west* (north?) side of Adaway. Please let me know if a tour would be useful.

Or I can check the utility maps at Ada Twp. I've never done that, but sounds fun.

Please do not use Steve Groenenboom's statements to reject any option out-of-hand.

We are only asking for the watermain to be on that side of the street for a *short distance* -- 2 or 3 or 4 house-lots.