

CITY OF MILWAUKEE
RECEIVED

2008 SEP 11 PM 3: 26

OFFICE OF
CITY ATTORNEY

September 8, 2008

Stili Klikizos
3941 North 62nd Street
Milwaukee, WI 53216-2110

CITY OF MILWAUKEE
2008 SEP 10 PM 3: 17
RONALD D. LEONHARDT
CITY CLERK

City Attorney Grant F. Langley
City Hall, Room 800
200 East Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Attorney Langley,

On June 7 and 8, 2008, my residence and property on north 62nd Street suffered significant damage due to heavy flooding in the neighborhood. Significant damage occurred to many homes and properties along 62nd and 63rd Streets between Melvina Avenue and Capitol Drive. The flooding occurred due to a blocked storm grate located at the edge of Dineen Park, just a few yards west and south of 63rd Street and Melvina Avenue. The blocked storm grate covers the entrance to an underwater "river" that runs from the Dineen Park lagoon and stream through to Milwaukee's sewer system.

The storm grate was completely covered with all manner of debris, including tree branches, leaves, cattails, pinecones, and general litter. This blocked grate prevented the rains of June 7 and 8 of 2008 from flowing through. Instead, the rains flooded the streets and alleys located on Melvina Avenue to the north, and 62nd and 63rd Streets, including their alleys, to the east and west.

My basement began flooding on Saturday, June 7, 2008, at about 6:00 p.m. I immediately called Charles Zingale, who is my neighbor directly to the north at 3947 North 62nd Street. Water was entering his home as well. Mr. Zingale, whose parents were the original owners of the Zingale residence, told me that a similar flood occurred in the 1970s, and it happened because of the blocked storm grate at Dineen Park. My neighbors directly to the south, the Xiong family, at 3935 North 62nd Street, confirmed that the storm grate was, in fact, blocked. They walked to the park, in the rain, and reported what they saw.

I immediately called 911 and explained the situation to the 911 operator. I asked that someone from the city come to check out the storm grate at 63rd and Melvina Avenue, that it was covered with debris, and that it should be cleaned immediately. At this point, there were a few inches of water in my basement.

Unfortunately, and for whatever the reasons, no one came to clean out the storm grate. I called my alderman, Joe Davis, at his residence. I called Mayor Barrett at his residence. I called 911 again. No one came. Meanwhile, my basement continued flooding, as did the basements of most of my neighbors along 62nd Street. By late evening, I had nearly three feet of water in my basement!

The next day, Sunday, June 8, 2008, the day began with relative calm. It had stopped raining, although more rain had been forecast for later in the day. My basement was still flooded, but the water was beginning to recede through the sewer drain located on the floor of the laundry room, while the sump pump had been completely overwhelmed and stopped working. I walked over to

the corner of 63rd and Melvina to check out the storm grate at Dineen Park, hoping that the city had cleaned it out. Unfortunately, it was still cluttered and completely covered with debris. It began raining again a few hours later, and my basement flooded for the second time.

Our street, 62nd Street, was once again flooded with at least two feet of water. My neighbors and I cleaned out the storm grates on 62nd Street between Capitol Drive and Melvina Avenue, which helped the water in the street to recede. City workers came but basically observed and did very little. We (my neighbors and I) explained the situation regarding the storm grate at 63rd and Melvina, but no one seemed to know anything about it, nor did anyone take action to clean out the grate on Sunday.

The storm grate at Dineen Park was finally cleaned out on Monday, June 9th, 2008. Unfortunately, it was too little too late. The integrity of my home was damaged, including basement walls, floors, and foundation. My yard and garage suffered damages as well. The furniture, appliances, treadmill, clothing, books, encyclopedias, miscellaneous items (such as luggage, photographs, papers, scrapbooks) and brand new furnace and central air-conditioning system (installed July of 2007) broke down and had/have to be repaired/replaced or thrown away (The Small Business Administration has estimated damage to my home and its contents to approximately \$22,000).

It rained heavily again on Thursday, June 12, 2008. My basement remained dry this time. Since the storm grate at Dineen Park had been cleaned several days prior, the water was able to easily drain rather than flood the surrounding streets and alleys. This confirmed my belief that the flood that occurred in my home and neighborhood on June 7 and 8 of 2008 would not have occurred had the storm grate been cleaned, allowing the rain to flow through.

I am writing this letter as a prequel to the claim that (some of) my neighbors and I will file with the city for damages to our properties. I am hoping to repair some of the structural damage that occurred, as well as to replace items such as my furnace air/conditioning system, appliances, and some furniture. I am a Milwaukee Public Schools teacher, and a long time city resident. My goal is to restore my home to its former state, rather than receive anything over and above what is due me.

Had the storm grate at Dineen Park been cleaned in a timely fashion, the flooding in the Dineen Park neighborhood (namely, Melvina Avenue and 63rd and 62nd Streets, including alleys) would not have occurred. The City of Milwaukee and/or the Parks Commission must be more diligent in maintaining these grates clean and free of debris so as to prevent flooding. Up until now, and to my knowledge, no one has claimed responsibility for this oversight. Whether it is a City of Milwaukee task, or a Park Commission task, I am unaware. I do know, however, that the blocked grate should have been cleared of all debris. This was a very preventable incident. The result is that many city residents have suffered substantial damage to their homes and properties.

While I realize that the rains of early June overwhelmed many neighborhoods and caused much damage, I am mainly concerned with the very preventable damage that occurred to my home, property, and neighborhood. The floods of June 7 and 8 in the Dineen Park neighborhood occurred because someone failed to order the Dineen Park grate to be cleaned. It is unfortunate for our city and its residents; however, it did occur and must be corrected.

I will be sending my claim within the next two weeks. I will attach a copy of this letter to the claim so that it can be identified more easily. I am hoping to avoid any kind of litigation as this would involve more time and expense to both the City of Milwaukee as well as to my neighbors

and myself. As I mentioned prior, I work for the city of Milwaukee and its fine families and children. I am not interested in filing a lawsuit. My goal is to recover some of the damages caused by the flood. I am hoping that my claim is carefully reviewed and considered for reimbursement.

Included in this letter is a statement written by my neighbor, Charlie Zingale, who attended the neighborhood meeting, held by Alderman Joe Davis Sr., on July 22, 2008 (I was out of town on that date so did not attend the meeting).

Please feel free to contact me with questions regarding receipts, photographs, inspections, or any other matter regarding my claim.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Stiti Kikizos,
Dineen Park neighborhood resident

414-463-2387 (home)
414-416-5983 (cell)
414-267-1172 (work)
stylianican@yahoo.com-E-mail

cc: Alderman Joe Davis 2nd District; Mayor Tom Barrett; Ms. Sue Black, Parks Director; Toni M. Clark, County Supervisor Second District; Gerry Broderick, Chair of Parks, Energy, and Environment Committee; Charles Zingale, Dineen Park neighborhood resident; Frank Fuchsberger, Dineen Park neighborhood resident.

On Tuesday, July 22nd, 2008, I, Charlie Zingale, of 3947 North 62nd Street, attended the neighborhood meeting. After listening to FEMA for over an hour, I was able to address Alderman Joe Davis and explain to him this was not an act of God but (an act) neglected by the County Parks Commission. I went to the grate on 63rd Street after the first heavy rain that flooded the area. (The) Grate was still plugged from cattails that washed down to the grate that were cut a week before the storm occurred by county works. That should have been removed. City workers told me they couldn't remove same because that was County property. I understand there were two county workers at the 7/22/08 meeting but they left before I was able to ask them any questions (unfortunately).



Charles Zingale