



April 6, 2020

The Honorable Laura Wentz
President, Upper Darby Township Council
100 Garrett Road
Upper Darby, PA 19082

Dear Council President Wentz,

At a time when thousands of residents are unable to work because of the COVID-19 crisis, and are likely worried about their ability to pay upcoming mortgages, we are extremely concerned that you are considering an ordinance (3070) that would instantly make selling a home in the Township much more expensive and difficult. The timing of this proposed ordinance – during a national health and economic emergency with unprecedented proportions – could not be worse for Upper Darby home owners.

Typical sewer lateral inspections cost hundreds of dollars, and needed repairs can run into many of thousands of dollars. Whether the repair is made by the seller prior to settlement, or an agreement is reached with the buyer to make the repair after settlement, the fact is that the cost of the service will almost always come out of the seller's pocket. The asking price of the home will need to decrease, or the seller will need to provide a substantial credit to buyers for the repair.

By demanding that current home owners in the township inspect their sewer lateral line prior to selling their home, Council members could be delivering a self-inflicted local real estate crisis on top of the unemployment, economic and public health crisis they already face. It is no secret that selling real estate in Upper Darby is already very difficult due to extremely high local property taxes. Those high taxes have already depressed the value of homes in Upper Darby Township by many thousands of dollars compared to neighboring communities. It is very likely that the recent COVID-19 crisis will depress home values even further.

Also, point of sale sewer inspections are a wholly ineffective method of addressing the issue of infiltration of fresh water into the municipal sewer system. By only inspecting approximately 1-2% of sewer laterals each year, this plan will only delay an effective solution to the problem for many decades to come. Using this method, it will take Upper Darby more than four decades to stop the infiltration of fresh water into the sewer system.

A much more cost-effective plan would be to first determine whether the issue is being created by the main sewer lines in the system. Once those issues are addressed, it would make sense to move forward with a comprehensive inspection and repair program focusing on private sewer laterals. That effort should begin in areas of the township where there are known infiltration issues. It should also include a well-thought-out program to assist home owners with repairs through available grants and public funding.

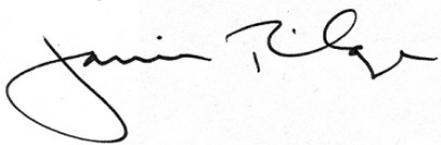
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Many Upper Darby home owners will likely be facing a very difficult time ahead because of losing their jobs, and perhaps a good number of them will have a hard time paying the mortgage on their home. There will also be Upper Darby residents who will no doubt face foreclosure due to circumstances that are completely out of their control.

Due to the unprecedented crisis your residents and all Americans are facing, we strongly urge the new majority of Upper Darby Township Council to table the currently proposed ordinance until home owners are safely through this Coronavirus pandemic. Upper Darby Township will then have an opportunity to craft a smart sewer maintenance process that serves both residents' and township interests, and provides a model for other municipalities to follow. I would be happy to participate in such an effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jamie Ridge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a sharp end.

Jamie Ridge
President/CEO

Cc: Mayor Barbarann Keffer; Councilman Brian Burke; Councilman Thomas Wagner; Councilman Hafis Tunas; Councilwoman Lisa Faraglia; Councilman Sheikh Siddique; Councilman Robert Gwin; Councilwoman Michelle Billups; Councilman Donald Bonnett; Councilman Matt Silva; Councilwoman Danyelle Blackwell; Township Manager/Chief Administrator Vincent Rongione ,Esq.; Township Solicitor Sean Kilkenny, Esq.