

## An oft-flooded street is dealt another delay

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**MERCHANTVILLE** — "Lake Glenwood" may yet rise again.

The long-planned reconstruction of several storm-water inlets and the replacement of underground piping for the borough's oft-flooded Glenwood Avenue have been postponed once again.

Construction was to have been finished this summer.

But Mayor John F. Morrissey said that the bids for the construction had come back too high and that the specifications would have to be re-drafted before any work could begin.

"They kind of knocked our socks off," Morrissey said last week of the bids, the lowest of which was more than twice the projected cost.

The mayor blamed the borough's engineering company, Remington & Vernick Engineers, of Haddonfield, for the setback.

But Craig Remington, vice president of the company, said Morrissey knew that part of the project would not be covered by state money and therefore would cost more than the company had estimated.

The engineering company, which has been studying the street's flooding problem for years, had recommended increasing the size of the piping to 24 inches from 18. The company estimated the cost of construction at \$45,000. The estimate did not include cleaning out a ditch that the pipes feed into.

The project had been on hold because of tight Merchantville budgets. Then, last year, the borough was awarded a \$45,000 state Department of Transportation grant for the project.

But when bids were returned earlier this month, they were much higher than projected. The cheapest bid was \$97,000.

"I just wish that the engineers had come up with a more accurate number," Morrissey said. "I think the

state would have awarded the contract, whether it came in at 42 [thousand dollars] or 62 [thousand dollars]."

Frank J. Seney, the Remington & Vernick engineer overseeing the project, said the state grant was never intended to cover the entire cost of the project. Part of the design included non-municipal-owned property — the ditch and at least one pipe — where construction would not be covered by the state, he said.

The borough is talking with Camden County Freeholder Scott M. Goldberg about obtaining some money for the project from the county. Several of the pipes involved in the project need extensive cleaning, and Morrissey said some of the pipes belong to the county.

Another looming problem is that the state grant money will expire Saturday, Morrissey said the borough had filed for an extension, which is generally approved.

No one expects the bids to drop 50 percent in cost, Morrissey said. But if the numbers can come in about \$60,000 to \$65,000, the borough would fund the rest, he said.

If the new bids can be accepted by the end of October, construction could be finished this year. Otherwise, Seney said, the project will have to wait until spring.

"Time is running out, unfortunately," he said.

Meanwhile, the waters on Glenwood Avenue will continue to rise every time there is a serious rain — about 12 times a year, residents have said.

The mayor said the delay also would cost taxpayers additional money.

"Believe me, [engineering bills] will be negotiated down," Morrissey said. "I attribute part of the problem to them. We're not just going to sit here and keep paying engineering bills."

## P-I\_September\_25\_1994

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Tue, Jul 16, 2019