



City of Santa Barbara

Public Works Department

Memorandum

DATE: April 15, 2021

TO: Water Commission

VIA: Amanda Flesse, Acting Water Resources Manager

FROM: Gaylen Fair, Water Quality Superintendent

SUBJECT: Receive a Presentation on Forward Lateral Software Services

The City of Santa Barbara operates and maintains a 256-mile wastewater collection system. This publically owned infrastructure is maintained by a combination of City staff and private contractors. Approximately 25,000 privately owned sewer laterals, totaling 300 miles, connect private plumbing fixtures to the City's wastewater collection system. Unfortunately, many of these laterals are old, poorly maintained, or damaged. Failing sewer laterals introduce water intrusion, roots, and debris into the City's sewer system, which can lead to raw sewage overflows into local streets, storm drains, and creeks. In 2020, City wastewater staff responded to 31 private sewer lateral spills.

The City of Santa Barbara's Sewer Lateral Inspection Program (SLIP) was established in 2007 as a way to address the increasing number of public and private sewer spills caused by private sewer laterals. Throughout the years, SLIP continues to develop and evolve in response to the community's needs.

The Video Assistance Program (VAP) is the most recent development for SLIP. The VAP is a City-managed sewer lateral inspection program that includes coordinating with a City-contracted plumber, costs for the video inspection (up to \$300), staff review and recommendations, and collaboration with the property owner on a repair plan, when necessary. The new VAP is anticipated to be a popular program.

Forward Lateral Software Services

SLIP requires digital video submission of the private sewer lateral inspection for City staff to review. There are handful of ways video inspections can be submitted, which often lead to confusion and miscommunication for the plumbing contractors, property owners, and City staff. To better organize and streamline the video submittal process, staff will be requiring the use of the Forward Lateral software program as a means to receiving, organizing, and reviewing sewer lateral inspection videos. Forward Lateral serves as a digital interface between the City, the plumbing contractor, and property owner for receiving and reviewing the private sewer lateral inspection videos.

The software enables the plumbing contractor to upload the video sewer inspection, answer the required pre-inspection questions, identify any sewer lateral defects, and submit the video to the City for review. The City's review includes evaluating the sewer lateral's

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condition, agree/disagree with the defects identified by the plumber, add defects if necessary, reject, or approve the video, and providing recommendations for required work on the sewer lateral. The software allows the property owner to be informed at every step of the process and to understand the defects identified by the City and the plumber.

Forward Lateral is the only software capable of sharing sewer lateral information between the City, plumbing contractor, and property owner. By standardizing submittals and providing an organized, single location for staff to receive video inspections, Forward Lateral would greatly reduce the staff time currently required to review video inspections. Forward Lateral also uses the City's inspection standards to identify defects, which ensures plumbers and the City use the same nomenclature to reduce miscommunication.

The cost for Forward Lateral is a flat fee, currently \$30 per inspection, which would be paid by the plumbing contractor; or by the City for property owners enrolled in the VAP. The streamlined submittal process and improved communication will likely result in cost savings for the plumbing contractors and property owners. Staff is going to seek approval from the City Administrator for issuance of a sole source purchase order with Forward Lateral for \$20,000. This amount is estimated to be sufficient for the City to cover one year of Forward Lateral's services for those enrolled in the VAP.