



Environmental Advisory Board

Meeting Agenda

July 29, 2026, 3:00 P.M.

Centennial II HR Training Room A

805 Central Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Virtual Attendance through Microsoft Teams

Order of Business

- I. Public Comment**
- II. Call to Order**
- III. Administrative Action***
 - Approval of June 24, 2026 – Meeting minutes
- IV. Office of Environment and Sustainability Comments**
 - Benchmarking Policy draft
 - Seeds of Change awards
 - Climate Equity Indicators Report update
 - West Fork Incinerator Demolition
- V. Information/Updates**
 - Mill Creek Conservancy District
- VI. Items for Vote***
 - None
- VII. Open Discussion**
 - Record rainfall to Cincinnati Region
- VIII. Presentations**
 - Councilmember Ryan James
 - Sustainability Central – Colleen McSwiggin
 - Western Hills Viaduct Construction – Department of Transportation & Engineering
- IX. Next Meeting**
 - The next EAB meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 26, 2026, at 3:00 PM.
- X. Adjournment**

Agenda Packet Materials:

- June 24, 2026 Meeting minutes
- Cincinnati Business Courier 7/17 Storm article

Environmental Advisory Board

Minutes of June 24, 2026

Members Present:

- **In Person:** Briana Mazzolini-Blanchard; Dave Schmitt; Douglas Walton; Kylie Johnson; Michael Roman; Monica Perdomo; Van Sullivan; Yasmine Allen
- **Virtual:** Andrew Musgrave; Ashlee Young; Carla Walker; Emmy Schroder; Ericka Copeland; Megan O'Keefe; Nathan Alley; Nayana Shah; Sarah Kent

Members Absent: Susan Sprigg

Staff Present: Oliver Kroner; Amanda Testerman; Lauren Clark; Ben Russ; Lily Moulin; Luke Hawes; Riley Brown; Lauren Ann Barnes; Sarah Keeney; Sean Johnson; Sue Magness; Ella Hill Crouch

Meeting: A meeting of the Environmental Advisory Board was held on June 24, 2026, at 3:00 PM at Centennial II Griesel Conference Room, 805 Central Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202.

Meeting Agenda:

- I. **Public Comment**
- II. **Call to Order at 3:04 PM**
- III. **Administrative Action***
 - Approval of May 27, 2026 – Meeting minutes
- IV. **Office of Environment & Sustainability Comments- Ollie Kroner**
 - Staff changes: new fellows, Erin Kable leaving
 - Energy Benchmarking and Building Performance Standard presentation
 - Signatures on Letter of Interest for Center Hill Battery
 - Mercantile Aggregation RFP released
- V. **Information/Updates**
 - Conversation with Councilmember Meeka Owens and plan to meet with Councilmember Ryan James – Dave Schmitt and Ericka Copeland
 - Overview of Canoes and Conversations event – Dave Schmitt
- VI. **Items for Vote***
 - None
- VII. **Open Discussion**
 - GCP Policy Actions
 - GCP Action R.1 – Yasmine Allen
 - GCP Actions under Natural Environment and Resilience focus areas – Briana Mazzolini-Blanchard
 - Balcony solar – Douglas Walton
 - Sustainability Central presentation at next meeting – Dave Schmitt
- VIII. **Presentations-**
 - **City's Multi-family Recycling Pilot** – Bob Gedert
 - **House Bill 303** – Nathan Alley
- IX. **Next Meeting**
 - Wednesday, July 29, 2026, at 3:00 PM
- X. **Adjournment at 4:32 PM**

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From the Cincinnati Business Courier:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/cincinnati/news/2026/07/21/msd-sewer-friday-rain-storm-flood-event-prevention.html>

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Cincinnati's mega storm may have been 1,000-year event; preventing flood 'impossible,' MSD says



The director of the Metropolitan Sewer District had a stark message in the wake of an unprecedented, devastating flash flood Friday: The volume of rain was so significant, no system would be able to handle it.

CITY OF CINCINNATI



By [Chris Wetterich](#) – Staff reporter and columnist, Cincinnati Business Courier

Jul 21, 2026 **Updated** Jul 22, 2026 6:10am EDT

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Story Highlights

- Record rainfall overwhelmed the Metropolitan Sewer District system July 17.

- The flash flood damaged at least 1,000 homes and businesses.
- Director Diana Christy said public infrastructure cannot handle such volumes.

Cincinnati Mayor Aftab Pureval declared a state of emergency late Tuesday, July 21, in response to unprecedented, devastating flash flooding Friday. The state of emergency, which allows Cincinnati to access federal and state aid for recovery, could last through Sept. 15.

The mayor's emergency declaration order "provides our city government the ability to move quickly as needed, and importantly, allows us to pursue further support at the state and federal levels," Pureval said in a news release.

The city is exploring and advocating for federal and state aid, Pureval said. While preventing such flooding given the volume of rain is impossible, "we're going to have to be intentional about infrastructure and our climate policies."

The director of the Metropolitan Sewer District also had a stark message in the wake of Friday's flash flood: The volume of rain was so significant, no system would be able to handle it.

MSD Director Diana Christy held a news conference Sunday, July 19, where she discussed the flood and the sewer system's ability to deal with the rain. In the

intervening days, MSD Principal Engineer John Barton and University of Cincinnati professor Patrick Ray say an initial examination of data shows the 5 inches of rain that fell in the course of a few hours has never happened in recorded, local weather history, making it potentially a once-in-1,000-years event.

The flash flood, centered in Hyde Park, Oakley, Mount Lookout, Madisonville, Pleasant Ridge, Norwood and Fairfax, likely impacted 1,000 or more homes and businesses, whose properties were damaged by the water. The first five neighborhoods are within the city of Cincinnati, while the latter two are their own municipalities, but all are within MSD's service territory.

MSD has received more than 900 service calls. Five inches of rainfall hit parts of those neighborhoods within a few hours, [according to the National Weather Service](#). A floodgate aimed at trying to contain Duck Creek in Oakley also failed to close, but even if it had, officials are not sure how much flooding it would have prevented.

"We understand how traumatic this can be," Christy said. "Our sewer system didn't fail. When we experience flash flooding like this we do hear a lot of concerns and comments about (how) the sewer system must be malfunctioning or not being operated properly."

Ray, an associate professor at UC and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) chair on water and climate change, downloaded historic rainfall data from Lunken Airport. It shows the most rainfall

ever recorded in a day at that weather station in Cincinnati was 4.73 inches on March 9, 1964, with 4.53 inches falling Oct. 20, 1985, being the second-rainiest date.

Ray, whose work takes him around the world while being based in Cincinnati, said when he first heard the total, he thought it had occurred in days, not hours.

"That's a shocking number," Ray said. "If you told me we got 6 inches in a day, I'd be like, 'Holy crap that's bigger than the biggest one we've ever seen.'"

The region averages about 42 inches of precipitation annually.

When scientists and climate experts talk about 100-year, 500-year or 1,000-year weather events, "it refers to the probability of those events occurring," [according to the National Weather Service](#). For example, for a 100-year flood, there is a 1% chance in any given year that a flood of that severity would occur.

There is a 0.1% chance of a 1,000-year flood happening in any given year.

"It should be stressed that the 100-year and 500-year events are independent events, from the perspective of probability. That means that if one of those event occurs, it has no effect on future events occurring," according to the National Weather Service. "If a 100-year flood event occurs, that does not mean that people are 'safe' for 99 years. The risk of having the flood in any given year is the same, regardless of if it occurred recently."

Cincinnati has both a stormwater utility, a largely unknown entity to most residents, and MSD's combined sewer system, which collects both rainwater and wastewater into one system. MSD, as a legal entity, is owned by Hamilton County, while the city manages it and claims ownership over some of its physical assets.

In most typical storms, rainwater enters storm sewer inlets before flowing into MSD's system. That often was not the case on Friday, Christy said. The physics of that much rainfall prevented it.

"There's a distinction between those storm inlets and the MSD combined sewer," she said. "We know that certain areas – what we saw was that it (water) didn't even get into the storm inlets. The water was coming down so fast it was just filling up the streets and rushing down roadways and into buildings without entering the storm system."

The ground in Cincinnati also was already saturated with moisture, leaving little opportunity for the soil to absorb it.

For an event of this magnitude, "There's really no sewer system that can maintain that level of volume ... (it) is going to be overwhelmed, and we are going to have flash flooding in our streets," Christy said.

Pureval told the *Business Courier* he agreed with Christy.

"Given the historic amount of rainfall and the short amount it fell ... any sewer system in the world would be overwhelmed," Pureval said. "That doesn't take

away from the loss of the community we've seen. Our priority is to help people in need. MSD is working around the clock. Our public service employees are on the ground as we speak. We're going to do what we do best as a community, which is to come together and help people in need."

Pureval: Historic storms happening with 'increasing regularity'

"These historic storms are happening with increasing regularity," Pureval said. "It's not doable to completely transform our infrastructure to accommodate a historic rainfall like this. That shouldn't take away from our genuine interest to do everything on the front end to make sure our system is responsive as possible. It's a challenging public policy management issue."

Asked about specific businesses on or near Hyde Park Square that have experienced repeated flooding before, Jenny Richmond, MSD's deputy director, said the curbs can be low and water hops over them as it rushes down the street, entering buildings through front doors, window wells and other openings, a concept known as overland flooding.

That's not to say there were no sewer backups. Video shown on television news and social media showed toilets and drains overflowing and manhole covers popping up out of the street, which could indicate a backup.

MSD, which has 2,000 miles of mainline sewers, urged everyone who experienced water in their house to [report it](#) (reports had to be filed within 48

hours of the damage occurring). But it also may be the result of water entering homes another way, in which case, MSD is not responsible for repairs and reimbursements for damage.

It also cannot specifically determine what caused the damage if it was not MSD's own system.

"I know that leaves customers frustrated," Christy said.

MSD long has been under a federal consent decree to take action to reduce the amount of raw sewage entering public waterways during rainstorms. The decree also requires it to reduce sewer backups and compensate property owners for damage caused by backups.

Public infrastructure is designed to deal with once-in-100-year events, Ray said, but after that, the conversations are tougher.

"Everything in life comes to benefit-cost analysis," he said. "The question is what are you going to protect yourself against? What risks are you willing to take in life and how much money do you have to spend? Hopefully you wouldn't live through more than one one-in-100-year event. You say, 'We're going to have to clean out our basements every 100 years.'"

One question, with global climate change, is whether these events are now more than once-in-100 years and the cost, both in money and disruption, of doing

something about it, including potentially moving residents out to make room for infrastructure that might be needed.

“The money is an interesting beginning to this conversation. But then you have to get the political will to move people around,” Ray said. “If it really was a one-in-a-1,000-year event, we survived it, now we don’t have to worry about it happening a while. Or do we seriously have to worry about this happening again?”

Christy urged people to consider how to prepare for such events themselves as they are unlikely to be solved with public infrastructure.

“We’re seeing these extreme events ... more frequently. That amount of rainfall ... to design a solution when you’re getting five inches of rain in an hour is really impossible from a public infrastructure standpoint,” Christy said. “This is a challenge we’re facing due to changes in our weather patterns and also each neighborhood has its unique challenges.”