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Elgin mayor: Storm cleanup efforts are 'what a good community is all about'

By MIKE DANAHEY
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The Kimball Street dam is seeing significantly larger amounts of water flow over it as a result of recent storms, making the area off limits to boaters, as is a good portion of the Fox River. (Mike Danahey / The Courier-News)

The Elgin City Council Wednesday evening heard a report on the city's storm recovery response and cleanup efforts and praised staff for the work being done.

Council member Rich Dunne said the comments he's heard from his neighbors and other residents about storm mitigation have been very positive.

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"Things have been going pretty smoothly in a rough terrain," Dunne said.

"There's not enough credit to go around," Council member Terry Gavin said.

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Gavin said social media exploded about the storm Friday and Saturday, and a post he put on Facebook about the city's efforts received 200 "likes," representing a positivity from residents. Gavin also noted that City Manager Rick Kozal was at the helm most of the weekend overseeing what crews were doing to address storm-related issues.

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"I'm proud of our staff and of our community," Mayor Dave Kaptain said. "(Neighbors) helped each other out. That's what a good community is all about."

Elgin Communications Specialist Molly Gantos told the Council that the city

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that happened afterward were further flooding issues, some road closures and traffic signals left out of service and power outages for about 5,700 ComEd customers, she said.

After the storm, the city's 911 emergency call center fielded 354 weather-related calls, with none for serious injuries, Center said. Through its 311 center and app, emails and other communications the city opened 450 cases for cleanup, Center said.

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Saturday morning to prioritize work, with safety issues the first to be addressed. That led to an all-hands-on-deck approach that's continued throughout the week, Center said.



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City Council member Rose Martinez volunteered, Center said. Hanover Township Emergency Services had 12 volunteer members out assisting Elgin Police and Fire Departments with basement pump-outs and debris removal. They also monitored downed power lines. And ComEd provided a cooling bus parked downtown Saturday near the police station to provide relief to those left without power.

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Staff department heads met again Monday morning to discuss remaining cleanup work, particularly removing tree branches and debris from neighborhoods. Residents were told to put tree limbs and other debris in the parkway as soon as possible, with crews coming in the day after an area's scheduled garbage pickup day.

Those efforts will continue through Saturday, Center said, and no stickers are required on yard waste bags through this coming Monday.

Center said that the Fox River, while receding, remains high, with the water moving fast and at unheard of volumes.

Thursday morning, Interim Public Services Director Kyla Jacobsen said that the United States Geological Survey reported Tuesday that 5 billion gallons of water was moving past a point in the river in Algonquin in a day, and typically, that amount of water is 120 million gallons.

That amounts to between 7,500 - 8,000 cubic feet per second of water flowing past that point Tuesday, compared to 185 cubic feet per second when the river is at normal levels, Jacobsen said. The flow would be faster in Elgin than in Algonquin as tributaries flow into the Fox between the towns and because the river runs downhill all the way to where it meets the Illinois River near Ottawa, she said.

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In the aftermath of the Friday storm, Elgin also closed Wing Park and its golf course. The course reopened Tuesday, and the park opened Thursday, Jacobsen said.

The city has no estimate yet on expenses related to recent cleanup efforts, she said.

Another big storm was supposed to hit Elgin Wednesday into Thursday, but took a more southern path instead, so Elgin received just a tenth of an inch of rain Wednesday into Thursday. As of Thursday, there is no rain in the area's weather forecast at least through the middle of next week.

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The Fox River is receding, but water levels remain high and the water is moving very fast. (Mike Danahey / The Courier-News)

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