

# Bovilsky: That's why Washington Village is being replaced

By Nancy Chapman 3 : 28 am EDT July 17 2018

*Updated, 12:53 p.m.: Additional comment from Adam Bovilsky.*

NORWALK, Conn. — The safety of the tenants is the first priority, Norwalk Housing Authority Executive Director Adam Bovilsky said Monday.

Bovilsky and others said there was no gas leak at Washington Village, which has been the focus of much attention from City health officials and others over the weekend and into Monday.

The Norwalk Fire Department [on Sunday found raw sewage in a trench](#) on Day Street, a hole related to the nearby construction of new housing, which has closed the road to vehicle traffic. Common Council member Ernie Dumas (D-District B) and others spotted rats on the street, found water in a Washington Village basement and reported a gas smell.

“According to the Fire Department, there was no gas leak,” said Bovilsky, who has just begun work as NHA Executive Director. “The Fire Department was called out due to a report of a gas smell and they tested for natural gas. I do not know who called them, but of course we encourage our tenants to leave the building and call 9-1-1 if they think they smell gas. The Fire Department



An open basement door Sunday at Washington Village. The basement was flooded, Common Council member Ernie Dumas (D-District B) said.

responded and did not register any natural gas on their sensors. We have not evacuated any tenants and neither the Fire Department nor the Health Department has asked us to move any of our tenants at this time.”

Eversource spokesperson Mitch Gross on Monday wrote to NancyOnNorwalk:

“Checks of the system in that area by our technicians have resulted in trace amounts or zero readings for natural gas. Repairs will be completed when the source of the natural gas odor is found.

“As a safety reminder, if you smell, see or hear what you believe to be natural gas leaking, remember “smell, leave, tell”:

- “Don’t turn on or off any lights or appliances
- “Don’t use your telephone or cell phone in your home
- “Don’t light any matches
- “Be sure to put out any cigarettes or open flames such as candles
- “Leave the building and call us from a nearby phone. The Eversource gas leak emergency line is 1-877-944-5325”

NancyOnNorwalk was not able to contact Bovilsky on Sunday. Bovilsky wrote Monday:

“{T}here was and still is standing water in the basement of some of our units which is a concern. The tenants in the effected buildings were already slated for moving as part of the long planned Washington Village redevelopment, and by coincidence, I had signed letters notifying them of the upcoming move and relocation services offered at the end of last week. They should be receiving 90 day notices to move shortly, but that notice is unrelated to the events that occurred over the weekend. Obviously if there was an immediate health concern, we would seek to move the tenants far more quickly.

“The water found in the basement of some of the old Washington Village

units is an all too often occurring event that my understanding dates back decades. This is one of the reasons why we are redeveloping Washington Village. We do not know for sure if it is rain water or tidal water and the Health Department has asked us to test the water before pumping. We are in the process of having the water tested.”

Mayor Harry Rilling on Sunday said he’d have the Department of Public Works look into the sewage leak, which Norwalk Fire Department Deputy Chief Ed Prescott and others said stemmed from an uncapped pipe.

“I haven’t had the full report back yet but I’ve had staff down there virtually all day,” Rilling said Monday evening, explaining that DPW and Health Department workers had been there along with people from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), Eversource and the Housing Authority.

The sewage line was fixed immediately, the sewage was removed and lime was spread, Assistant to the Mayor Laoise King said, explaining, “the rats we think are just because there’s extreme high tides, and construction.”

“Due to the construction, from time to time we have seen an increase in rat activity and then the unusually high tide may have added to that activity,” Bovilsky said in a Tuesday email. “We have been using a professional exterminator when rat activity has been seen and just asked them to come back based on the reports over the weekend.”