

## 'The water reclamation district is holding us as a hostage'

### Marklund sewer hook-up awaits 4 more irrigation valves to be fixed



By BRENDA SCHORY

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Caption

BLACKBERRY TOWNSHIP (July 10, 2019) – Officials at Marklund’s Mill Creek campus thought they had [worked out a problem](#) with the water reclamation district to proceed with a review of its application for a sanitary sewer hookup – until a certified letter arrived advising them otherwise.

A July 3 letter from Jason Fowler, engineer for the Mill Creek Water Reclamation District, stated the district will continue to review applications for sewer hookups but “will not consider approval of the applications prior to the completion of the repairs of the 18th hole valve and the four remaining valves.” The 18th hole refers to the Mill Creek Golf Course, whose irrigation system is part of the water reclamation district's treatment process. Shodeen Development, which built Mill Creek, owns the golf course.

Marklund’s Mill Creek campus, which serves profoundly disabled adults, just broke ground July 9 to build a \$9 million therapeutic day school on the campus in Blackberry Township near Geneva.

“We are a hostage between ... this longstanding issue between both Shodeen Group and the water reclamation district,” Marklund President and CEO Gil Fonger said.

“Shodeen has agreed to fix (the valve.) Now the water reclamation district wants it all fixed. They already fixed the primary valve ... but now there’s four other valves that Shodeen has already said they are going to fix,” Fonger said. “But until they are absolutely fixed, they are not going to do any more applications. They will review, but not issue permits.”

Shodeen Development, which built Mill Creek, also owns and operates the Mill Creek Golf Course, whose irrigation system is part of the water reclamation district’s treatment process.

“We’re not going to flush our first toilet till June of 2020,” Fonger said. “And to just hold us as a hostage between these two – it’s hard to look at it any other way. The water reclamation district is holding us as a hostage. It’s just a ridiculous situation.”

David Patzelt, president of the Shodeen Group, sent a June 26 letter to the water reclamation district, stating the company would immediately begin repairs to a mainline valve on the 18th hole, which will “allow for redundancy and a water supply loop in the irrigation pipeline system.”

“This will allow portions of the irrigation system to continually operate in some areas while other areas of the system are shut down for maintenance, alleviating your concern of an ‘unreliable and erratic irrigation system,’” Patzelt’s wrote.

Patzelt’s letter also calls on the water reclamation district board to “immediately re-open its review of the (sewer hook-up) applications (and) sign permit applications.”

Shodeen’s sewer hook-up applications for Shodeen Rowhouses and The Vistas are also halted by the reclamation district’s stance.

Patzelt’s letter also stated that though its applications were filed before Marklund’s, “Shodeen voluntarily suggests that Marklund’s application should be reviewed and completed before the Shodeen Mill Creek Vistas.”

Patzelt said he agrees with Fonger’s assessment that Marklund is being held hostage.

“Not by Shodeen, but by the Mill Creek Water Reclamation District,” Patzelt said. “I believe that was – all in essence – to use Marklund as leverage and just create additional chaos.”

Patzelt said the most critical valve on the 18th hold has been repaired and the company is in the process of repairing the other four.

“My concern ... is that I repair these four other valves, and then he (Fowler) makes up another story of something else he wants done.”

Neither Fowler nor water reclamation district board chairman James Dougherty could be immediately reached for comment.