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A crew works on the sewer repair site at the intersection of Capitol Avenue and Saginaw Street on Sept. 9 in Lansing. PHOTOS BY NICK KING/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

3 decades later, much of Lansing's sewage still flows into rivers

Officials hope \$300 million, 10-year plan will finish project

Matt Mencarini

Lansing State Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

LANSING — About a dozen feet below the pot-holed pavement along Saginaw Street and Oakland Avenue are other pieces of Lansing infrastructure long in need of repairs.

For decades, the combined sewer system in parts of the city has been sending billions of gallons of untreated sewage from Lansing toilets into the city's rivers when there's as little as a half-inch of rain.

In parts of Lansing, sewage and stormwater still flow through the same pipes. In dry conditions the system works fine. But when rainwater or melted snow reach certain levels it becomes too much for the pipes to handle and the sewer-stormwater mix can overflow into waterways before its treated.

And for decades, the city has been trying to fix the system by separating sewers from stormwater drains. The project is more than three decades



New pipes on the sewer repair site at the intersection of Capitol Avenue and Saginaw Street on Sept. 9 in Lansing.

old, having started in the early 1990s, and has already cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

The project was supposed to be done years ago, under a 2004 pact with the state that mandated work be done by the end of 2018. The city fell short of that goal, in part, because the costs began to exceed available funds,

Lansing Public Service Director Andy Kilpatrick said. A new agreement signed in 2019 between Lansing and the state's Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy sets 2035 as the deadline for the entire system to be separated.

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EATON COUNTY

Officials consider \$8.4M in budget cuts

Staff, 4-H funding among reductions

Rachel Greco

Lansing State Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

CHARLOTTE - Eaton County officials are set to consider a new budget that includes about \$8.4 million worth of staff reductions and cuts to services, ranging from reductions to animal control to the elimination of funding for the 4-H program

The county's Board of Commissioners is expected to vote on the proposed \$40.6 million general fund budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year on Sept. 17. It comes after months of debate and line-by-line consideration of where commissioners could and should cut spending after voters twice in the last year rejected tax increases.

Proposed cuts include the elimination of the Sheriff's Office road patrols, severe cuts to Animal Control, the reduction of nearly 30 staff positions, and over \$1 million in cuts to outside agencies, including Clinton-Eaton-Ingham Community Mental Health, the Barry-Eaton District Health Department and MSU Extension.

The latter could lead to the elimination of the county's 4-H program, ending a partnership between MSU and Eaton County that's been in place for more than a century and impacts more than 700 youth and 4-H participants.

County officials say significant cuts had to be made to balance the budget and ensure financial stability. The county had a projected \$1.3 million financial shortfall in the 2024-25 budget, expected to compound in the coming years.

Officials have been aware of the problems for seven years, ever since a financial stability workgroup issued a report in 2018. The COVID-19 pandemic delayed discussion about the problem, and the \$10 million in federal COVID money helped the county through the past several years.

"Twice in the past year, the people of Eaton County rejected millage proposals to increase revenues for the County, revenue I believed was needed," Board of Commissioners Vice Chair Brian Droscha wrote in a memo to the board. "But the message to this board was clear: do more with less, reduce the size of this

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