

Date: 4/22/15

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My name is Bryan Bird, I own the home at 408 12th St in Gilcrest CO, and have since December of 2004. I purchased this home from my in laws who purchased the home during the summer of 1998. Over the twenty six plus years this home has been in our family there has never been a problem with flooding of any sort until September of 2014, when the increasingly high ground water levels encroached upon our basement causing flooding and thousands of dollars of damage, not to mention the displacement from the basement of the home which has three bedrooms and a secondary bathroom. This flooding caused damage to the newly installed (March of 2013) carpet, along with the baseboard and drywall; and also created potential health risks due to the formation of mold.

We worked as quickly as possible to rectify the issue, we began removing the water logged carpet and padding within 24 hours of flooding, working tirelessly to vacuum and mop up water that continuously flowed into the basement from seams and along the foundation. We attended a town hall meeting that first night where we learned that rising ground water levels was a known issue in and around Gilcrest and that other home owners were also being affected. The city informed us that they too were having problems with the sewer and waste water treatment ponds due to the high ground water levels, and that they had no legal recourse in regards to pumping additional water in the hopes of lowering the levels. It was recommended that I contact the State, specifically the State Engineers office which I did the following day. I reached out to a Mr. Dick Wolfe, State engineer and Director of the Colorado Division of Water Resources. Although Mr. Wolfe was very kind in taking my call and discussing the issue, he also had no good news. What Mr. Wolfe informed me was that his hands were tied due to the legislation already in place restricting wells from being pumped and that the current legislation restricting well pumping was the direct cause of the rising ground water levels. He suggested we try to approach the legislation to enact change, and that he would reach out to the Governor's office to see if anything could be done on their end.

Over the next week we worked tirelessly to vacuum and mop up the seemingly endless amount of water that continued to flow into our basement. We had to hire a company to come in and test for mold to ensure the house was safe, what they found was elevated levels of mold in the air despite our best efforts to keep the basement dry. This led to a flood cut of all the existing walls, where four feet of drywall was removed around the entire basement, in some locations we found mold growing up to three feet high on the back of the drywall. We had to purchase and run a dehumidifier in the basement 24/7 to try and keep mold from growing and causing any further damage while we continued to deal with water flowing into the basement.

Not knowing how to proceed I contacted several local companies to obtain quotes on finding a resolution to the problem. The first quote was from Ben Frankin Plumbing out of Loveland, their plan was to put in place an interior French drain with two sump pits; cost \$26,000. The next quote was from a mechanical company out of Greeley, they agreed with the plan from Franklin Plumbing and their quote was \$22,000. These types of costs were not within our reach or financial capabilities. Gilcrest is not a rich town, most home values are below \$150,000, with many below \$100,000, so the thought of trying to

figure out how to finance a project that is 25-33% of your home value was overwhelming, what does one do when the cost is almost unattainable, yet without something being done the value of your home because almost nothing.

So we decided that with the help of friends and family that we would tackle the project ourselves. We hoped that we might be able to minimize the work, effort, and cost by going in stages based off of the quotes we had received. We started by installing a single sump pit in the North West corner of the basement. One would think a single pit wouldn't be that difficult, yet one would be wrong with that assumption when dealing with existing flooding conditions. After jack hammering through the concrete we spent the next several hours digging in saturated silt, sand, and dirt, with the constant flow of water coming in. We would have to stop every few shovel full of dirt and vacuum out the water that had collected at the bottom of our pit so that we could take a few more shovel full out. Every shovel full that we took out had to be put in a five gallon bucket and then hand carried up and out of the basement. It took three grown and very capable men hours to install this one pit. With the newly installed pit in place the pump was running every few minutes. Over the course of the next week we saw half of the basement dry up, but only half, the single pit was not enough to handle the entire basement and the high ground water levels.

So a second pit was installed on the Southern side of the house, the same process was used, the work of digging through silt and water logged sand. After this second pit was completed about another 25% of the basement dried up, but water continued to low in. At this point there was no other choice but to complete the work by installing a French drain. And the same back breaking work had to be done along the foundation of the basement, about 130 linear feet of concrete had to be jack hammered up, placed in buckets and hand carried out, then the process of digging through water logged silt, sand, and dirt in some places almost two feet down. We had a crew of eight people working, and still the project took multiple days. Part of the process of installing a French drain is to not only dig a trench to lay the pipe, but you have to first lay a rock bed, all that rock for the entire trench had to be hand loaded and carried down into the basement.

The French drain seemed to work, over the coming weeks the basement dried, although there is still concern that the drying of the basement may have been as much about the time of year, the reduced amount of ground water due to the winter months. The pumps that were running every few minutes expelling water from the sump pits were running in longer increments, there is still a very valid concern that with the spring run-off, or continued legislation that restricts well pumping that the water could return and that the French drain or pits may not be able to keep up with the flow. To make matters worse we are only allowed to pump the water out into our yard, so we are only circulating the water, not actually moving it to prevent it from coming back.

Once the French drain was in place and seemingly working the process started to return the basement to a useable place within the home. First concrete had to be hand carried into the basement to seal up the flooring that had been torn up for the drain. Then drywall rehung, walls painted, flooring installed, trim completed, and cleaning, lots and lots of cleaning from months of demolition work.

All told the project, done almost entirely by ourselves with the help of family has cost us upwards of \$10,000, renting tools, paying for disposal of debris (half a dozen dumpster loads), drywall, flooring, concrete, pumps, pits, etc. We may have cut our costs in half by doing the work ourselves, but this unexpected costs have hurt our family, we had no plans or savings put aside for this type of work or problem. And although we hope the solution we have put in place works, there is still a great risk to our home as long as ground water levels stay high.

There are many homes like ours with full basements, homes that reach 8-12 ft below the surface. We need the legislatures help in lowering and managing the ground water levels so that not only our home can be saved moving forward, but that hopefully other homes in and around our area won't have to go through the same financial and personal burden relating to ground water flooding. I realize there are many people affected by the use and storage of ground water, all we are asking for is that the legislature consider managing the ground level waters in such a manner as to help protect families who have owned homes in these areas for decades, our economy is already tough enough as it is, in fact I have been unemployed for five months now, making the financial burdens of this unexpected project that much more difficult.

I truly appreciate your time, attention, and care in helping us address and resolve these issue hopefully not only in the short term, but to find long term solutions that protect us all. I have included a few pictures of our basement as the work was performed. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding this letter.

Thanks,

Bryan Bird

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