

New Castle City
Flood Resiliency Committee Meeting
Minutes
May 20, 2025 – 7:00 p.m.
1 Municipal Boulevard, New Castle, DE

Members Present: Alice Riehl, Chair
Tish Gallagher
Fred Gallagher
Florence Smith

Absent: Mike Smith
Mellissa Pavone
Timothy Moore

Also Present: City Administrator Antonina Tantillo

Ms. Riehl called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll call followed and a quorum to conduct business was declared.

Ms. Riehl reported that Ms. Seitz resigned from the Committee effective immediately.

Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Smith to approve the minutes of the April 15, 2025 meeting as amended. The motion was seconded by Ms. Gallagher and was unanimously passed.

Grant Update

Mses. Tantillo and Riehl reported on grant funding:

- Army Corps of Engineers – Funding may not be available until FY 2027; however, the project is on their radar and Ms. Tantillo is in contact with the Corps regularly. A discussion of federal funding ensued.
- Bond Bill – The request for funding under the Bond Bill has been submitted, and more information will not be received until July.
- FEMA Grants – Ms. Riehl reported that FEMA grants were cut off prospectively and retrospectively. Ms. Tantillo added that she recently spoke with Senator Coons and discussed the impact to the State and shared her frustration and concern. Senator Coons stated that legislators are reaching across the aisle in an attempt to find solutions.

Buttonwood and Holcomb Lane Follow-up

Ms. Riehl distributed several maps of the affected areas, noting that she visited the site. She stated that the City built a culvert under Buttonwood Avenue to direct runoff toward Rt. 9 and back toward the dike; however, during rain events the water pools and backs up onto Holcomb Lane. Additionally, beavers have dammed up areas where water could be flowing. A discussion of who is responsible for that area is ensued. Ms. Tantillo stated that she is working with legislators and the Conservation District on this matter. She added that activity in that area is monitored to ensure that they do not cause any stoppages. Ms. Smith added that she spoke with

Representative Cooke and he said he would look into the matter. Ms. Gallagher noted her understanding that Representatives Cooke and Councilman Caneco are considering holding a Town Hall meeting in New Castle, possibly in June.

New Initiatives

Land Use and Policy – Ms. Gallagher suggested that the Committee focus more on Land Use and Policy, particularly regarding the continued building of large apartment complexes; suggesting that they lobby for the use of more pervious materials. Ms. Tantillo stated that the Committee could make recommendations to the Planning Commission for changes to the Zoning Code.

Incentives – Mr. Gallagher suggested that incentives be initiated to encourage the use of more porous materials.

Stormwater and Drainage –

- Ms. Gallagher opined that there may be opportunities the Committee could focus on in concert with the Tree Advisory Commission (TAC). Mr. Gallagher noted that trees have been planted at Penn Farm for use by the TAC. A discussion of the tree canopy and appropriate street trees ensued.
- Ms. Riehl stated that Charleston Rainproof Mini-Grant Program provides training and funding to Charleston, South Carolina, residents to install a rain gardens, rain barrels, and planting trees and native plants to reduce flooding in their city. She suggested holding informational meetings on a yearly basis to encourage flood reduction. She added that holding a yearly meeting would help improve the City's rating for flood insurance discounts. She also opined that encouraging the installation of rain gardens might help with obtaining a grant from Longwood Gardens.
- Ms. Gallagher also noted that under the New Castle County Clean Stream Champion program residents who pledge to be Clean Stream Champions can purchase rain barrels for a discounted price of \$50. <https://cleanstreamchampion.org/rain-barrels/> Ms. Tantillo opined that the 4-H Program has a rain barrel program and recommended that the Committee contact Charleston to discuss the program. Ms. Riehl will contact Charleston.
- In response to a question from Ms. Smith, Ms. Tantillo stated that the storm drains are checked prior to rain events. She added that there is a funding opportunity through the State to inspect storm drains via closed-circuit cameras, and she will be pursuing this grant in the fall.

Comments from Committee Members

Ms. Tantillo stated she would look into a concern brought up by Ms. Smith regarding trees on Holcomb Lane.

Ms. Riehl stated that through the Sea Grant program, the Flood Vision® vehicle ("FloodRover") will be driving through Delaware coastal communities, including New Castle, to collect video, laser, and elevation data to generate photorealistic flood and sea level rise visualizations. When the data has been processed the Committee will have access to it. Ms. Tantillo added that the data will be impactful when applying for grant funding.

Ms. Gallagher noted that Living Shorelines in Dewey Beach has put in a braided oyster-shell reef, wetland plantings, riprap enhancements, and tidal outflow gates. They also put in a kayak launch. She and Mr. Gallagher will reach out to Dewey Beach officials to get more information to share with the Committee.

Public Comment

Bill Emory – Baldton

- Mr. Emory stated that the street cleaning truck is equipped with equipment to clean out storm drains. Ms. Tantillo added that residents can request that specific drains be inspected for cleaning.
- Mr. Emory offered his name up as a possible candidate for the open seat on the Committee, and provided his background.

Phil Gross

Mr. Gross stated that:

- Rain barrels are also available outside the Rt. 9 Library.
- One of the suggestions to mitigate paving at large apartment complexes is to put grass on the roofs, which would absorb rainwater. Mr. Gallagher noted that grass on roofs has to be cut.
- Funding being sought by the committee will benefit the community.
- Residents can plant trees themselves as long as the tree has been approved by TAC.
- A copy of the maps and other documentation distributed by Ms. Riehl was provided to Mr. Gross.
- In response to a question from Mr. Gross, Ms. Tantillo stated that some of the storm drains have medallions.

There being no further business to discuss, Ms. Riehl called for a motion to adjourn.

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Gallagher and seconded by Ms. Smith. The motion was unanimously passed and the meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich
City Stenographer