

New Castle City
Flood Resiliency Committee Meeting
Minutes
March 18, 2025 – 7:00 p.m.
1 Municipal Boulevard, New Castle, DE

Members Present: Alice Riehl, Chair
Gail Seitz
Mike Smith
Timothy Moore
Tish Gallagher
Fred Gallagher

Absent: Florence Smith
Mellissa Pavone

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.

Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Gallagher to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2025 meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Seitz and was unanimously passed.

Discussion of Status of USACE and DEMA Outreach

Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) – Ms. Riehl reported that Ms. Tantillo sent the Corps a Letter of Interest requesting help for the City for flood mitigation. Ms. Tantillo will be sending four additional letters to three other Sections of the Corps and a general letter requesting assistance.

Mr. Gallagher opined that the \$6M estimated in the HAZUS Modeling is far too low a number. Ms. Seitz noted that the map reviewed at the February meeting shows that the only area included in the Study was between Army Creek and Gambacorta Marsh; and the extensions they modeled did not cover many significant areas, including Battery Park, The Strand, and Buttonwood. She added that the flood plain is not covered by the extensions. Ms. Seitz reached out to Ms. Dhringra regarding this issue, but has not received a reply yet. Ms. Tantillo opined that the Study was done on the portion the Grant covered to do the Model; adding that she would look further into the original Grant for clarification. A further discussion of the Grant ensued, during which it was stated that the Study has to consider sea level rise.

BRIC Grant – Ms. Tantillo explained the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Grant that she applied for through DEMA and FEMA. The Grant requires a 25% match that City Council has agreed to fund. The application is due to DEMA by April 1st. Ms. Tantillo stated that Ms. Riehl provided a Letter of Support to include with the application, adding that the other Committee members could also give her Letters of Support to include with the application as well.

Hill Day – Ms. Tantillo reported that during a meeting with State legislators in Washington, D.C. on March 12th she was told that they were unaware of when a final decision of funding would be made; however, they recommended that the Committee continue to pursue applying for grants. She added that on the Federal level all new projects are on hold at this time.

Bond Bill – Ms. Tantillo is working with City Council regarding the projects they want to proceed with under the Bond Bill, and suggested that the Committee send her information on specific projects they would like to be considered for inclusion under the Bond Bill. During discussion Mr. Moore explained the project for which Delaware City received 100% funding under the Bond Bill (Community Redevelopment Fund).

Discussion of Future Initiatives

Private Funding – Ms. Tantillo opined that there must be some environmental organizations that offer grant funding.

Battery Park – In response to a question from Ms. Riehl, Mr. Gallagher explained that because a definitive height was not established the recent work in Battery Park done by the Trustees was not raised higher.

The Netherlands – Ms. Riehl opined that the Dutch are the best people in the world to know how to protect against flooding, and proposed that a contact be established to see if they have any suggestions that would be helpful in New Castle. Ms. Tantillo noted that The Netherlands were mentioned during a discussion at the RASCL (Resilient and Sustainable Communities League) Summit. Ms. Riehl will contact someone from The Netherlands.

Areas of Flooding – Ms. Riehl suggested that a survey of all areas of the City affected by storm and riverine flooding be compiled to ensure that they are considered; and a discussion of known areas of flooding ensued.

DNREC – Ms. Seitz noted that DNREC Secretary Greg Patterson is doing Field Trip Fridays to visit vulnerable sites in Delaware and suggested that he be contacted to visit New Castle. Ms. Tantillo will follow-up with Mr. Patterson's office.

Additional Comments by Committee Members

DelDOT – Mr. Moore stated that he will be meeting with Stephanie Johnson from DelDOT and representatives from Pennoni Consultants on Friday, March 21st at 1:30 p.m. to discuss work that had been done in the Three Countries area. He added that Ms. Johnson stated that area is on DelDOT's list of top five areas to get corrected. He will report back to the Committee at the April meeting.

Reports – Ms. Riehl had copies of the Vulnerability Report made for new Committee members. Ms. Seitz will email a digital copy of AECOM's report to all members.

Public Comment

Bill Emory - Baldton

- Mr. Emory noted that there is a storm drain in the Three Countries area that is being blocked and suggested that Mr. Moore speak to DelDOT about it during his meeting on Friday.
- Mr. Emory stated that he had sent pictures to City Council of the swamp from years ago showing the dike with all the tributaries that were dug in and that gave the water some place to go. He opined that digging out the swamp would control the flooding. Ms. Riehl noted that when Council investigated Mr. Emory's theory they were told that as soon as the area is cleaned out it fills back up again quickly. Mr. Emory noted that after it is dug out it does need to be maintained.

Phil Gross – 1301 13th Street

- Mr. Gross opined that with potential grants coming in he is in favor of keeping the Committee intact for the next year or so; opining that the Committee is “on the right track” by pursuing private funding.
- Mr. Gross noted that the area in front of the police station does flood.
- Mr. Gross suggested that the Committee reach out to WILMAPCO.
- Mr. Gross opined that plantings along the river would provide a slight buffer.

Mark Lorenz – 59 The Strand

- Mr. Lorenz noted that Public Works assisted him in cleaning up an area on Harmony Street; adding that he submitted a proposal to City Council to plant a perennial garden in that area and has a promise of funding from a local non-profit organization if Council gives its approval. Mr. Lorenz is considering planting some marsh grasses in the garden as well.
- Mr. Lorenz noted that at his request the City has contacted an engineer to look at a storm drain that appears to be damaged. He added that there is some significant erosion in that area and asked if there would be any support for installing a berm.

Ms. Gallagher suggested that Mr. Lorenz reach out to Arasapha as well.

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

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Gallagher. The motion was seconded by Ms. Gallagher. The motion was unanimously passed and the meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich
City Stenographer