

New Castle City
Flood Resiliency Committee Meeting
Minutes
April 15, 2025 – 7:00 p.m.
1 Municipal Boulevard, New Castle, DE

Members Present: Alice Riehl, Chair
Gail Seitz
Timothy Moore
Tish Gallagher
Fred Gallagher
Florence Smith
Mellissa Pavone

Absent: Mike Smith

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 Ms. Seitz to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2025 meeting as amended. The motion was seconded by Mr. Moore and was unanimously passed.

Grant Update

Ms. Tantillo reported on grant funding:

- BRIC Grant – On April 4th Ms. Tantillo received word that the BRIC Grant is no longer available. She hopes to put the study for possible elevation of the dikes and how much they should be raised in the Bond Bill request.
- Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) – Three additional letters were sent to the Corps and acknowledgement of receipt has been received. Ms. Tantillo will continue to monitor this matter.

Discussion of Current Initiatives

Private Funding

- Longwood Gardens – Ms. Riehl noted that Longwood Gardens has a Quality of Life grant program for 5013c non-profit organizations. The deadline to apply is September 1st. Ms. Tantillo stated that the City has collaborated with the New Castle Community Partnership in the past and she will follow-up with them about submitting a Grant Request. Ms. Riehl noted that a specific plan is required to apply for the grant; opining that the plan may need to be more natural, such as rain gardens or living shoreline.
- Southeastern Environmental Group – This group has a grant for community protection open to non-profit organizations.

Other Initiatives

The Netherlands – Ms. Riehl reported that The Netherlands has joined with the American Flood Coalition. She obtained a booklet that has possible solutions, many of which may cost between \$100,000 and \$150,000. Ms. Tantillo stated that City Council has said they would like to use some funds for flood mitigation. Ms. Riehl asked that the Committee members review the booklet for further discussion at the next FRC meeting. Some of the ideas included harvesting rainwater with cisterns or rain barrels. Ms. Gallagher noted there is a group at the University of Delaware that offers rain barrels for sale in the spring.

Rain Gardens – Ms. Riehl noted that there is an empty field at 6th and Harmony Streets. It was noted that parcel belongs to St. Peters Church.

Battery Park – The pathway in Battery Park and the riprap at Bull Hill was brought up and Mr. Gallagher stated that the Trust had discussed moving the path farther back into the Battery to insure that the pathway is not impacted by the river; however, no timeline has been set. It was noted that the walkway is particularly low at Bull Hill. Discussion of the berms and dikes at Battery Park ensued. Ms. Seitz noted that the river overflows the bank along The Strand.

Ms. Riehl noted some other possibilities:

- Stormwater Parks / Green Streets
- Pumping Systems
- Deployable Flood Barriers
- Living Shorelines – Ms. Seitz noted that at one time a living shoreline in Battery Park was investigated, but the cost was prohibitive.

Ms. Riehl suggested that the American Flood Coalition be contacted to see if a meeting could be arranged to discuss the issues in New Castle.

DNREC – In response to a question from Ms. Seitz, Ms. Tantillo stated that the City did reach out to the new DNREC Secretary, and she will follow-up regarding having them come out on one of their Field Trip Fridays.

City Survey – Ms. Riehl recommended that a survey of the city be made to identify all areas that are affected by flooding and have a large map drawn up. Ms. Tantillo will reach out to Emily Dhringra.

Vulnerability Assessment – Ms. Seitz noted that the Vulnerability Assessment has very good information on critical structures, environment, current mitigation, etc., and recommended that the members review it.

Comments by Committee Members

Florence Smith

Ms. Smith distributed photos of the area between Penn Valley and Buttonwood that is very wet and floods consistently, and a discussion of that area ensued. Ms. Riehl suggested that Jeff

Bergstrom be invited to the next meeting. Ms. Tantillo will speak with Mr. Bergstrom and reach out to the County as well.

Tim Moore

DelDOT – Mr. Moore reported on a meeting that he and Ms. Tantillo had with representatives of DelDOT and an engineering firm used by DelDOT regarding flooding on 6th Street by Three Countries Pizza. Mr. Moore noted that the Engineer did not appear to be convinced that there was an issue; however, when the group went on site, he was very surprised by how much the area has settled. It was noted that the area had been cleaned out around the drain in the last year. Mr. Moore sent pictures of the area in summer when it was completely flooded and in winter showing water on the shoulder and in the turning lane. The safety issue was stressed with, and Mr. Moore felt they the DelDOT representatives understood the gravity of the situation. A number of ideas were discussed for a temporary fix until funding is available. DelDOT was asked if their funds could be combined with another State agency to increase the funding; and, that would require planning to determine the best plan of action.

DelDOT will review data and determine the best possible plan for a temporary fix. Mr. Moore also stated that this has been prioritized by DelDOT. In response to a question from Mr. Gallagher, Mr. Moore stated that changing the intersection was a WILMAPCO issue, and the DelDOT representatives did not make any comment about it.

Mr. Moore will follow-up with Karen at Pennoni to discuss the study and ideas. Ms. Tantillo opined that Pennoni would be determining the cost of the project.

In response to a question from Ms. Gallagher, Mr. Moore explained that the storm drain Mr. Emory brought up at the last meeting is on St. Peter's property. Mr. Moore added that Mr. Emory had informed him that the netting has been removed.

Mr. Moore opined that for a temporary solution, the City may have to consider putting in pumps as Delaware City did to keep the water out. In response to a suggestion from Ms. Seitz, Mr. Moore stated that Mayor Paul Johnson from Delaware City is very knowledgeable about the system and had offered to attend a meeting of the FRC to explain what has been done there. Ms. Tantillo added that Townsend received a grant to televise the storm drains to see what needed to be fixed.

Public Comment

Phil Gross

- In response to a question from Mr. Gross, Ms. Riehl noted that the booklet she referenced is "*Adaptation for All – How to Build Resiliency for Communities of Every Size*" and is available online on the American Flood Coalition website.
- Mr. Gross noted that WILMAPCO stated they would completely clean out any drainage issues.
- Mr. Gross stated that he takes pictures of the Three Countries area, Battery Park, and Lukens Drive monthly and would be happy to share them with the Committee for reference regarding flooding.

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- In response to a question from Mr. Gross regarding Rt. 9 past Dobbinsville, Ms. Tantillo stated that adding a pervious layer to the roadway is one of DelDOT's top priority projects.
- Mr. Gross noted that the Rt. 9 Library has a sign offering barrels for sale through a local company.

Aretha Brown – William Penn court

Ms. Brown stated that the ditch in Buttonwood is full of brush and debris, and the property a bit further down floods constantly. Ms. Brown has contacted DNREC and other agencies to no avail; and asked if the City can look into the matter to rectify it. She added that it was a mosquito breeding ground. Ms. Riehl will meet with Ms. Brown after the meeting.

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

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Gallagher and seconded by Ms. Smith. The motion was unanimously passed and the meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich
City Stenographer