

New Castle City Flood Resiliency Committee Meeting
Minutes
May 21, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.
1 Municipal Boulevard, New Castle, DE

Members Present: Alice Riehl, Chair
Gail Seitz
Tish Gallagher
Fred Gallagher
Timothy Moore
Sandra Taylor

Absent: Michael Marinelli
Mike Smith

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 to approve the February 20, 2024 minutes as amended was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

Update on NRCS

Ms. Riehl read an email received from Ann Baldwin:

Thank you for following-up on the status of the Watershed Plan for the City of New Castle.

In March we received notice from our Watershed Division that funding would be significantly reduced this year and many projects would be waitlisted. We were asked to send our anticipated needs and I projected we would need \$2,000,000 for the New Castle Plan development this year.

I will continue with the process of developing the contracting package to hire the consultant to write the plan.

We should know by July whether the funding request will be approved or waitlisted.

I am sorry this is not better news at this time.

Ms. Riehl noted that “wait listing” could be influenced and at the suggestion of Council President Souder she contacted Senator Carper’s office. A meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, May 23rd, with Mses. Riehl and Seitz, the City Administrator and Senator Carper’s Legislative Director Michael Santora, and Regional Director Bonnie Wu. Ms. Seitz recommended that Senator Coons and Representative Blunt-Rochester also be contacted; and that the PIFR and a summary of studies that have been done be forwarded to Mr. Santora and

Ms. Wu prior to the scheduled phone call to demonstrate that the City and the Task Force/Committee have been working on this issue for quite a while. Ms. Riehl will also forward a copy of Ms. Baldwin's recent email. Mr. Moore suggested that the impact on the city be stressed to Senator Carper's representatives.

Ms. Riehl noted that Chris Rogers stated that the Modeling Study was put off because of the NRCS, and the funds were returned to DEMA.

During discussion the members agreed to postpone further research into alternative sources of funding and scheduling the next FRC meeting until Ms. Baldwin contacts the committee in July.

Visit to Hoboken

Members of the Committee met with Caleb Stratton, Chief Resilience Officer for the City of Hoboken. Ms. Riehl reported that the visit was very instructive.

- Hoboken is similar in size to New Castle and is basically at sea level.
- The city is not rock-based.
- Huge cisterns have been built under parks to collect water from non-tidal rain events.
- Mr. Stratton has a staff of 12 working on flood mitigation.
- To date, \$550M has been spent on cisterns to mitigate flooding from rain events.
- Hoboken has bulkhead-type protection similar to Delaware City.
- A Referendum was passed by residents to establish a fund for flood mitigation, which gave all residents a stake in flood prevention.
- All new construction and/or renovation is considered in terms of flood events and plans are inspected by the Floodplain Manager. Mr. Stratton suggested that New Castle form a partnership with Delaware City to share its Floodplain Manager. Ms. Riehl will discuss this with the City Administrator.

Mr. Stratton offered several other suggestions:

- Build relationships with State legislators.
- "Get a shovel in the ground" to show that something is being done.
- Review the floodplain map to identify areas of flooding, where there is protection and where there are weaknesses and communicate this information to the community.
- Use historic preservation as a reason for flood mitigation and find other reasons why areas not in the Historic District should buy in to the idea of flood prevention.
- Consider both tidal and non-tidal events.

Ms. Gallagher added other notes:

- Hoboken is focused on dual-purpose areas where cisterns are built under community parks, playgrounds and/or sports fields.
- Mr. Stratton has a 25-30 member Advisory Committee who are all stakeholders.
- Hoboken installed Portland Loo units in public areas.

Mr. Gallagher suggested that the committee identify residents who are affected by flooding in their yards and are involved in flood mitigation, noting that they can become advocates for the

committee in their neighborhoods. He also noted that Hoboken is very proactive in flood mitigation. Ms. Gallagher noted that areas between the sidewalks and the street have been made into mini wetlands to help with drainage as well.

Ms. Riehl read a letter received from John DiMondi regarding the Flood Resiliency Committee into the record.

Ms. Riehl stated that having someone with expertise in flood management and mitigation is critical, and she will speak with the City Administrator and the City Council President regarding this. Ms. Seitz concurred that a City Engineer is needed, and suggested that the committee advocate for that with City Council and the City Administrator.

Ms. Gallagher will contact Delaware City to find out who their Floodplain Manager is.

Other Initiatives

Depending on what Ms. Baldwin reports to the committee in July, Ms. Riehl may speak with Mr. Rogers about following through with the Modeling Study.

Comments from Task force Members

Mr. Moore noted that it appears some clearing is being done along Broad Dyke. Mr. Gallagher said the State is working on the bridge.

Ms. Seitz stated that she and Ms. Gallagher have started reviewing sections of the city website. It was noted that the banners and headings on the city website cannot be changed; however, the content can be edited. Ms. Seitz and Gallagher will continue their review. Ms. Riehl noted that the Outreach Committee has started its own website. Ms. Gallagher noted that another suggestion from Mr. Stratton was to get photographs from residents of flooding in their yards that can be published on the website.

Public Comment

Phil Gross – 1301 13th Street

Mr. Gross stated it was reported at the Planning Commission meeting that 1,000 apartment units are in the pipeline; however, by his calculations that number is 1,600-1,800 units; which would raise the population of New Castle to approximately 7,500. He urged the FRC to use its authority to recommend to City Council that a moratorium be placed to stop the building.

Mr. Gross concurred that the committee needs stakeholders in all neighborhoods. Mr. Gross stated that no one believes in the FRC; there have been zero results; there is no date for shovels in the ground; and the FRC has no information to present to the public of what it has accomplished.

Mr. Gross noted that WILMAPCO promised that they would clean the storm drains for any projects where authorization has been received from the City.

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

Flood Resiliency Committee Meeting
May 21, 2024

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded and unanimously carried, and the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich
City Stenographer