



Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group

October 20, 2022 | 6:00 p.m. | Hybrid (Virtual and In-Person) Meeting

Minutes

Advisory Group Members Present:

V	John Chapman	P	Howard "Skip" Maginniss
P	Dino Drudi	P	Brian Sands
A	Charlotte Hall	P	Janette Shew
P	John Hill (Chair)	P	Christine Thuot
P	Cheryl Leonard	P	Katherine Waynick (Vice-Chair)

P = Present A = Absent V = Virtual (on call)

Staff Present: Mitch Dillon, DPI; Amanda Dolasinski, T&ES; Jesse Maines, T&ES Division Chief, Stormwater Management; Dan Medina, Stormwater Program Manager; Terry Suehr, Director of Project Implementation; Jonathan Whiteleather, DPI; Erin Bevis-Carver, T&ES Division Chief

Staff Virtual: Brian Rahal, Stormwater Program Section Lead, Ehsanullah Hayat, Stormwater Management Division

Action Items are in bold

The meeting began at 6:00pm. With eight Ad Hoc Group members present in person, quorum was met.

1. Chair's Welcome

The Ad Hoc Group was renewed recently by City Council. This is the first meeting of Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23).

Councilman Chapman stated that the Ad Hoc Group is an important conduit of input and information for City Council and City staff, as well as an important source of energy and dedication to efforts to improving flooding in the City. **Councilman Chapman is looking for input from committee members regarding short- and long-term vision for the Ad Hoc Group.**

Mr. Hill indicated the Ad Hoc Group learned a great deal under Mr. Maginniss' lead in the past year. This year, Mr. Hill would like to focus on structure (defining what Ad Hoc Group deliverables should be throughout the year) and impact (i.e. how the Ad Hoc Group can have the most impact in the City, and not just during Ad Hoc Group meetings).

2. Electronic Meeting Notice

Mr. Hill read the electronic meeting notice. Mr. Drudi noted that the last sentence of the electronic meeting notice should be revised, as some Ad Hoc Group members are participating in person.

Councilman Chapman and City Staff will inquire if there is a revised version of the meeting notice.

Ms. Thuot pointed out that the statement from the last meeting could be applicable.

3. Approval of the June 29, 2022 Minutes

The meeting minutes from June 29, 2022 were approved by a unanimous vote in favor.



4. Flood Action Program Update (City Staff)

Dr. Medina indicated that all Tier 1 projects in the master schedule are on schedule.

Mr. Whiteleather provided a progress report for the Large Capacity and Combined Sewer area projects.

- a. Commonwealth/ E. Glebe & Commonwealth & Ashby: the contract for full design has been awarded to a consultant. Design will start soon.
- b. Hooffs Run Culvert Bypass: a consultant designer has been selected and is under price negotiations.
- c. Pitt & Gibbon – data collection and alternatives analysis with concept development have started.
- d. Nethergate – data collection and alternatives analysis have started.
- e. Ms. Waynick asked what the communication plan is for these projects. Mr. Whiteleather indicated that a communications plan will be established early during the large capacity projects design. Ms. Waynick stated that community members often ask what problems the large projects are trying to solve, why the projects are so big, and what impact the projects will have.
- f. Mr. Drudi asked that the City notify the Ad Hoc Group when conducting a public meeting so Ad Hoc Group members can attend. Mr. Hill added that the Ad Hoc Group can help spread the word about meetings. The Ad Hoc Group and City agreed that notifications will be sent by Dr. Medina via email to the Ad Hoc Group. Ms. Thuot liked the idea of notifications to the Ad Hoc group, adding that Ad Hoc Group members may be interested in attending outreach meetings for projects that do not specifically impact their homes. The Ad Hoc Group's knowledge of and sharing of the full list of Flood Action projects helps residents understand more holistically what is being done across their community. Ms. Thuot anticipates the public will want to know which designs are being chosen and why, as well as what supporting analysis was used to make those decisions. Ms. Waynick concurred that residents are curious about the complexities and specific data for infrastructure projects.
- g. Mr. Maines suggested that larger projects have dedicated web pages to help with public outreach and education.
- h. Mr. Drudi asked whether "design underway" means a design contract has been awarded for Pitt & Gibbon. Mr. Whiteleather clarified that an on-call contractor, who has an established contract with the City to perform work as needed, is currently performing analysis. The on-call contractor will then develop a 30% (concept) design that includes survey. After 30% design completion, the City will likely release a request for qualifications (RFQu) to select a final designer.
- i. Ms. Thuot asked whether a design alternative will have been selected by 30% design. Mr. Whiteleather answered yes, although the design is subject to subsequent changes.
- j. Mr. Drudi expressed concern that an on-call contractor may not be vetted for the complexity of working in the combined sewer area. Dr. Medina indicated that using on-call contractors greatly expedites preliminary design, as procuring a contract can take months.
- k. **Mr. Hill proposed and the Ad Hoc Group agreed to spend more time at the next meeting to discuss the large infrastructure projects in detail. The Ad Hoc Group will develop questions for City staff in advance of the meeting.**
- l. Ms. Suehr indicated caution is needed when sharing multiple alternatives with the public. The public should understand that just because an alternative is investigated does not mean it should move forward. Mr. Sands asked why many design alternatives end up being eliminated. Ms. Suehr responded that there are many possible reasons. A primary driver is physical constraints,



such as elevation or existing utilities. Other times, cultural or environmental considerations can eliminate alternatives.

- m. Ms. Waynick commented that many municipalities around the Country still have a combined sewer system and this issue is not unique to the City of Alexandria.
- n. Mr. Drudi asked whether the RiverRenew Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) tunnel could mitigate flooding. Ms. Bevis-Carver responded that no, the tunnel reduces combined sewer overflows into the Potomac River to improve water quality. Flooding in the community will require different modifications within the combined sewer area.

Mr. Dillon provided an update on the City's Spot Improvement project portfolio. **See slides for additional notes.**

- a. Two additional projects have been added since the last Ad Hoc Group meeting - one inlet project in the Park Fairfax neighborhood and a larger inlet program which covers the entire City.
- b. Two-thirds of the portfolio are now in-motion or completed.
- c. The Mount Vernon Dual Corrugated Metal Pipe (CMP) Culvert Project in the Arlandria neighborhood has moved to the planning phase after the City received a Community Flood Preparedness grant from Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VA DCR). The anticipated cost is \$1M or greater.
- d. The Hume Avenue Bypass project moved into the design phase in August 2022. A community meeting was already held, and another is planned for February 2023. Soil borings will be completed in the near-term.
- e. Multiple projects in the Arlandria neighborhood (Edison & Dale Phase 1 – Reed Inlets, Dale Overland Relief Channel, Edison Drainage Improvements) have moved into design. Data collection is underway. An internal kickoff meeting and public meeting will be scheduled for November 2022.
- f. Mr. Hill asked whether these project statuses are reflected in the Flood Action dashboard. Mr. Dillon responded that they are. The City will assess progress in November 2022. **More detail on progress can be provided at the next Ad Hoc Group meeting.** Dr. Medina added that the City plans to update the master schedule and dashboard every three months.

Mr. Maines reported updates since the last meeting regarding grant funding. **See slides for additional notes.**

- a. Grant funding from the CFPF has allowed the Edison & Dale projects to be funded faster than previously anticipated (originally FY26). Mr. Drudi asked what CFPF stands for. Mr. Maines responded "Community Flood Preparedness Fund" grant from VA Department of Conservation and Recreation. 45% of the proceeds from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative go towards the Community Flood Preparedness Fund.
- b. FY22 Clifford/Fulton/Manning Community Program Funding (from Congressman Don Beyer's Office) has been awarded but requires some additional analysis for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements to obtain the funds. The City has allocated funds to match the grant award.
- c. The Notabene Dr/Four Mile Rd/Old Dominion Blvd large capacity project is scheduled for FY27, but if grants are received, portions of this project can be accelerated.



- d. Ms. Waynick asked for more clarification in future meetings on projects that involve disconnecting basement drains. The City concurred. The City explained that many basements have a drain right outside the house which flows to the sanitary sewer and may backup when the sewer is full. Backups can be prevented by disconnecting this drain from the sanitary sewer and sending the flow to a green alley. A green alley has a permeable pavement surface which allows water to infiltrate and be stored in aggregate under the pavement. Mr. Sands asked if the City is moving towards promoting drain disconnects. Mr. Maines stated yes. Mr. Sands noted that residents are concerned about the long-term permeability of green alley surfaces. Mr. Maines noted there are ways to store the stormwater without use of permeable surfaces which may clog.
- e. Flood Mitigation Pilot Grant Program
 - i. Mr. Drudi asked if a proposal for extending grants to multi-family buildings will be presented in one or two meetings. **Mr. Maines responded yes.** The City is still reviewing Mr. Drudi's proposal and evaluating equity for smaller participants.
 - ii. Ms. Thuot asked whether funding for multi-family/condos would be part of the \$769k allocated to the grant program for FY23. Mr. Maines responded yes. Ms. Thuot noted that including multi-family/condos in the program might necessitate the need for further funding. **Mr. Maines stated this need will be discussed further with the Ad Hoc Group and City Council after review of the proposal.** Ms. Thuot and Mr. Drudi proposed that the City look at which condominiums are experiencing flood issues to estimate how much additional funding might be necessary.
 - iii. Ms. Leonard noted that condominiums can contain hundreds of taxpayers that also deserve funding because they experience flooding problems which can be dangerous and costly to mitigate.
 - iv. Ms. Thuot asked whether the \$769k allocated for FY23 includes the \$90k left from FY22. Maines indicated that the \$90k rollover is in addition to the \$769k allocated.
 - v. Mr. Drudi asked whether the City has evaluated whether funding for the program has been sufficient, in total and per resident application. Ms. Thuot indicated some applications were over the \$5k cap. Mr. Maines indicated **the City intends to evaluate whether the cap of \$5k is appropriate, whether the program will be expanded to multi-family/condos, and whether the program will be expanded for proactive flood mitigation.**
 - vi. Mr. Hill asked whether additional grant program funding will appear in the Stormwater Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Mr. Maines responded that ideally it will appear in the FY24 budget. Ms. Waynick noted the grant program is paid for by the Stormwater Utility Fee. Raising the grant program cap should be balanced with increases in the Stormwater Utility Fee.

Ms. Dolasinski provided a progress report regarding Flood Action communications. **See slides for specific notes.**

- a. Mr. Hill and Ms. Waynick shared that community association email lists and meetings have been an effective way to raise awareness about the newsletter and Flood Action dashboard.
- b. Ms. Leonard asked if the City could email out the newsletter. Ms. Dolasinski responded that the newsletter is emailed to people who sign up for the newsletter. The newsletter publishes on the first non-weekend day of even months. Ms. Leonard indicated signing up for the newsletter is difficult.



- c. The Project Dashboard is starting to be utilized more and more by residents. Mr. Hill challenged the City to **develop creative ways to encourage citizens to visit the Dashboard and figure out how the Ad Hoc Group can help.** Mr. Hill would like to triple website traffic within a year.
- d. Ms. Dolasinski is continuing to showcase the engineering work that the City is undertaking on social media and in the newsletter. Ms. Waynick indicated this media is helpful for resident understanding.
- e. City subject-matter experts are taking interviews with reporters to share different aspects of the Flood Action Alexandria program. 12 stories have been released about the program since August 2022. Ms. Waynick asked whether the 12 news stories mentioned by Ms. Dolasinski are linked in the newsletter or on the City website. **Ms. Dolasinski will provide links.**
- f. Ms. Thout recommended using regular, active web links to organize the newsletter and provide a link to the dashboard to drive traffic to the dashboard.
- g. Dr. Medina recommended posting links to the dashboard on Next Door.

5. Discussion of 2022-23 Workplan

Mr. Hill presented the proposed list of actions for 2022-2023 for the Ad Hoc Group. **See slides for specific notes.**

- a. Action items were organized around four themes: Community Awareness, Business Involvement, Assessing Plans & Budgets, and Informing City- and State-level Policies.
- b. **Mr. Hill asked the Ad Hoc Group to review and provide feedback on the actions and what specific actions they would like to help with.**
- c. Mr. Drudi noted that there has been relatively little business involvement to date. The current business rep in the Ad Hoc Group is stepping down. **The Ad Hoc Group, Councilman Chapman, and Dr. Medina will work to fill the position since this is an important demographic group.** The Ad Hoc Group discussed reasons why businesses may have not been as vocal, including possibly not owning the commercial properties they are operating from. Ms. Leonard is working on ways to convince community members that may be renting to vocalize their flooding issues with the City. Mr. Sands and Ms. Waynick alluded towards the natural tendency of people to take a reaction-based approach to infrastructure risk rather than a preventative approach. Ms. Shew suggested surveying businesses to get quantitative data related to flooding and business/rental property owners to help owners understand risk and mitigation costs. Mr. Drudi recommended contacting the Chamber of Commerce, Restaurant Association, and other business organizations to obtain data and a rep for the Ad Hoc Group.
- d. Ms. Waynick will focus on policy. Mr. Hill will focus on tracking budgets.
- e. Mr. Hill requested a leader for the Community Awareness workstream. **Ad Hoc Group to send Mr. Hill an email if interested.**

6. Discussion of memorandum in support of the stormwater utility fee

- a. A CIP and Stormwater Utility Fee discussion between City staff and City Council is occurring on October 25, 2022. The session is a working session, not a voting session. Mr. Hill asked how the Ad Hoc Group could help that discussion. The City indicated the Ad Hoc Group could show support for the proposed increase in the Stormwater Utility Fee. The City is recommending increasing the fee by 5% (increasing from approximately \$294 to \$308 for a typical single-family



home) to fund ongoing and future stormwater projects. FY25 and FY26 have projected 16% increases to fund construction of the Hooffs Run Culvert Bypass and Commonwealth/Ashby/Glebe large capacity projects.

- b. Mr. Maginniss moved to endorse the 5% increase for FY24. Mr. Drudi seconded. The Ad Hoc Group members voted unanimously to pass the motion and will **draft a brief memorandum of support.**

7. Discussion of the Group's stance on recent RGGI (Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative) developments

Mr. Maines provided an overview of RGGI and recent changes.

- a. Through RGGI, industry and power companies pay for carbon emissions.
- b. In September 2022, Virginia's total revenue from the RGGI auction was almost \$74 million. To date, since Virginia joined the initiative in March 2021, the state has received over \$450 million.
- c. 45% of the proceeds go toward funding the Community Flood Preparedness Fund (CFPF) grant program. In September 2022 this provided approximately \$33 million for CFPF. The City has received multiple CFPF grants. Both Ms. Waynick and Mr. Sands expressed the climate mitigation benefit of RGGI, in addition to funding flood mitigation.
- d. Governor Youngkin seeks to cease Virginia's participation in this program over concerns that power companies will pass the carbon tax on to VA consumers. Discussion is ongoing and a public comment period is open until October 26, 2022 on the topic. The City is preparing public comments to provide its perspective. The comments will mention that the City experienced intense rainfall events caused by climate change during FY21. This led to the Flood Action Alexandria Program being initiated, along with increases in the Stormwater Utility Fee. The CFPF is helpful to accelerate flood relief to Alexandria.
- e. Ms. Waynick indicated there is proposed legislation in the VA state House that would disallow power companies from passing the RGGI fees onto residents. Mr. Maines added that Delegate Bulova is expected to propose additional legislation which would create a similar program to the CFPF that is not reliant on RGGI. Ms. Waynick noted CFPF benefits all VA communities, not just the City of Alexandria and Northern VA.

The Ad Hoc Group discussed whether they should make an independent comment, considering the benefit to the City while also recognizing RGGI is highly politicized. **The Ad Hoc Group agreed to wait for the City to draft their comment, then will provide their input on the City's comment. The Group agreed that comment by individual Ad Hoc Group members is fine.**

8. Group's deliverables and immediate next steps

- a. The next Ad Hoc Meeting will be around December 12, 2022.
 - i. **The next meeting will allocate more time to detail on large capacity projects.**
 - ii. **Mr. Hill will work with members of the Group to draft a memorandum to the City Council regarding the 5% increase in the Stormwater Utility Fee before the next meeting.**
 - iii. **Members should determine which of the work streams they would like to work on and who will lead the Community Awareness work stream.**
 - iv. **The City and Ad Hoc Group will work to increase traffic to the Flood Action Dashboard by 300% in the next year.**



v. **Mr. Hill and Dr. Medina will find a business representative to join the Ad Hoc Group.**

9. New business and walk-up topics

- a. The Ad Hoc Group's yearly report is located on the Flood Action web page.
- b. Mr. Maines gave an overview of proposed updates to the Stormwater Utility Fee Credit Manual, originally adopted in 2018. This program allows residents to lower their Stormwater Utility Fee by implementing stormwater practices on their property. The changes will be presented to City Council on November 9, 2022 and incentivize residents to use the program without impacting revenue to the City. Proposed changes:
 - i. Aim to make applying to the program easier, lower documentation and certification requirements, provide renewal notifications, and increase the amount of credits per practice.
 - ii. Increase the crediting cycle to two years
 - iii. Add mature tree preservation and dry floodproofing to the list of approved practices
- c. The proposed changes will be posted online before November 9, 2022. Mr. Drudi indicated the manual and application process are complex, and requested the application form be simplified to one page.
- d. The City is working on a diverse public outreach campaign for this program. The City asked the Ad Hoc Group to spread the word about this program.

10. Public Comments

- a. Ms. Rose Esber spoke on behalf of the Metropolitan Condominium at 1707 Prince St. and the Upper King Street Coalition. They have spent \$300,000 on a flood gate and \$120,000 on fixing electrical, elevator, and pump systems. Impacts also included personal property damages and cleaning costs. Ms. Esber indicated a nearby hotel also flooded. Ms. Esber supports extension of the grant program to multi-family/condos and continuation of green projects in the City. Ms. Esber also noted that not all residents in the City have internet access, so other means of contacting people are necessary. Ms. Esber believes that speaking events at libraries, direct outreach to civic associations and churches, and utilizing the Ad Hoc Group's diversity lead would be helpful.
- b. Mr. Drudi proposed a start time for the next meeting of 7pm to incentivize not going over-time. The group agreed to keep the 6pm start time, but more effort will be put into streamlining the agenda and keeping the meeting to two hours.
- c. Mr. Drudi noted that the Ad Hoc Group has been renewed for just one more year and wants to initiate the next renewal well in advance of Group expiration and request perpetuity. The Group discussed that justification is needed for City Council to support the Ad Hoc Group and provide City staff for these meetings. Mr. Drudi suggested adding a fifth work stream to the Group's action plan regarding the Group's continuity. Mr. Hill indicated Council support will require the Group to deliver on action items.

11. Adjourn 8:34pm

Mr. Maginniss moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Drudi seconded. The Ad Hoc Group members present voted unanimously in favor.