



# Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group

June 7, 2023 | 6:00 p.m. | Hybrid (Virtual and In-Person) Meeting

## Minutes

### Advisory Group Members Present:

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

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

**Staff Present:** Jesse Maines, T&ES Division Chief, Stormwater Management; Mitch Dillon, DPI; Terry Suehr, DPI; Erin Bevis-Carter, Sanitary Division Chief; Dan Medina, DPI; Jessica Lassetter T&ES Stormwater; Bill Skrabak; Felicia Montoney

### Action Items are in bold.

The meeting began at 6:06pm. With 6 Ad Hoc Group members present in person, quorum was met.

#### 1. Approval of the April Minutes

The meeting minutes from the April 2023 meetings were approved unanimously.

#### 2. Press Coverage of Ad Hoc Group Annual Report

The recently developed Ad Hoc Group Annual Report was covered in the [Patch](#).

#### 3. Update on Flood Action Program (City Staff)

Mr. Whiteleather provided updates for **Large Capacity Projects**.

- Commonwealth, Ashby, Glebe: survey was completed in March and the team is starting detailed utility investigation and 30% design. The City is also starting geotechnical investigations shortly. This work involves boring small holes in the ground to test soils, find groundwater elevations, and determine infiltration rates. The City anticipates 30% design completion in Fall 2023. The City is also planning to provide notifications to the public using door hangers (approximately 1,800 single family homes, and general notifications to businesses, neighborhood associations, and multi-family buildings) and host a public outreach event in late July or August. Ms. Leonard's board meets July 11, and **requested information before then. Mr. Whiteleather indicated a separate meeting can be hosted with the HOA board if the public outreach event does not occur before then. Mr. Drudi requested that he attend the outreach meeting as a representative from the Federation of Civic Associations. Mr. Hill indicated that the Ad Hoc Group should be leveraged to get notifications out to the public.**
- Hooff's Run Culvert Bypass: The kickoff design meeting occurred June 2, 2023 with the design contractor, Arcadis. The consultant team is starting by updating the CASSCA model and conducting data collection. Mr. Hill asked when public outreach will start for this project. Mr. Whiteleather



indicated the City is holding a kickoff meeting with the public outreach consultant team and can provide an update once a public outreach plan has been established. Mr. Hill recommended signage at the project site.

Mr. Whiteleather provided updates for **Combined Sewer Projects**.

- a. Pitt & Gibbon: Coordination is ongoing with Alex Renew. The City will share an alternative with the public once a feasible solution is vetted.
- b. Nethergate: The City's preferred alternative has been selected and presented to the public and National Park Service (NPS). Significant coordination and review is anticipated with NPS. Mr. Drudi asked whether the project will be funded by NPS. Mr. Whiteleather indicated no. **Mr. Drudi asked if he could be notified ahead of all public meetings. Mr. Whiteleather indicated yes.**

Mr. Dillon provided updates for **Spot Improvement Projects**.

Mitch explained the status for projects with an extended schedule:

- a. Lloyd's Lane: the final plans are in review by the Director.
- b. Oakland Terrace Timber Branch: the City is combining this project with others that are proposed nearby.
- c. Mount Vernon Cul-de-Sac Inlets and Alley: the City is coordinating with Washington Gas after finding an unexpected utility. Mr. Sands asked what the cross street is for the Mount Vernon Cul-de-Sac project. Mr. Maines indicated Commonwealth Ave.
- d. 100 Hume Ave. Storm Drain Bypass Design: Additional work on E. Raymond Ave. that was scheduled for the future has been added to this project to consolidate construction impacts to the community and provide better flood mitigation.
- e. Edison Street Cul-de-sac drainage improvements is being extended since existing infrastructure near the project area needs repairs. This additional work adds scope to the project.
- f. Clifford Fulton & Manning: The City is working through the process of obtaining the grant funding awarded for this project.

There are no changes to the projects that have expedited delivery.

Other Updates:

- a. The City has developed a draft Request for Proposal (RFP) for Commonwealth, Ashby & Glebe Extension that provides flood mitigation and capacity improvements from the intersection of Mount Vernon Ave and Ashby St to the intersection of E Raymond Ave and Mount Vernon Ave. The project is being procured through an on-call contract with AECOM. The project budget is currently \$7 million.
- b. Two new investigation projects are underway (near E. Bellefonte Ave and near 2810 Valley Drive). These projects will help the City understand local flooding issues residents are facing. **Mitch will provide dates for public meetings associated with these projects.**
- c. Milestones: please see slides for a list of recent City milestones reached.
- d. N. Columbus St Alley is currently being monitored for additional data and is suspended from the project list.



Mr. Dillon provided an update on major **Targeted Maintenance Initiatives**.

- a. The City is nearly done with removing nuisance vegetation in the bottom of the Holmes Run Channel to create more capacity.
- b. Mr. Maines indicated the retaining wall repair along the Hooff's Run Culvert is underway.
- c. Mr. Drudi asked about a pipe under Pendleton St. which may be deteriorated. **Mr. Dillon will review and provide additional information to Mr. Drudi.**

#### **4. Communications**

- a. The City is still actively searching for a Flood Action program communication lead.
- b. Please see slides regarding statistics about recent communication.
- c. Mr. Hill asked whether recent social media comments from the public are positive or negative. Mr. Medina indicated that the comments are mixed commentary.

#### **5. Alexandria Flood Resilience Plan**

- a. Ms. Lassetter provided an introduction to the Alexandria Flood Resilience Plan (FRP), an outline of which was distributed to the Ad Hoc Group ahead of the meeting. **Ms. Lassetter is requesting feedback by June 27 from the Ad Hoc Group, particularly with identifying any gaps, opportunities, or areas of confusion within the draft outline.**
- b. The FRP intends to provide a long-term plan for resiliency for Alexandria, even after the currently identified Flood Action projects are implemented.
- c. Development of the FRP is an action item of the overall 2023 Energy and Climate Change Action Plan, which was review by City Council during the City's May 2023 legislative meeting. The Energy and Climate Change Action plan outlines the need for initiatives to mitigate climate change itself by reducing carbon emissions, as well as to mitigate the hazards of climate change, including on-going flood mitigation and urban heat island mitigation.
- d. The City has dedicated funding to develop the FRP since it is included in the City's Long-Range Interdepartmental Work Plan. Funding for the solutions has not been dedicated since the solutions have not yet been developed. T&ES, DPI, Jacobs (consultant), sister agencies/stakeholders, and the public will all be involved in the development of the FRP. The FRP also integrates with other existing long-term plans and initiatives from the City and Northern Virginia.
- e. See slides for proposed FRP outline, methodology and milestones. The proposed methodology includes a vulnerability analysis, which will then be used to inform flood mitigation strategies and changes to policies and regulations. The proposed FRP methodology also incorporates community input, consideration of cost and schedule of solutions, and funding.
- f. Ms. Lassetter's contact information can be found in the slides.
- g. Mr. Hill asked what the planning horizon is for the FRP. The City indicated 50 years.
- h. Mr. Hill indicated the FRP should reflect the current Flood Action projects planned/identified. The City agreed.
- i. Mr. Skrabak indicated the FRP will also try to identify and address flooding and risks which may not occur today, but may occur in the future.
- j. Mr. Drudi indicated that the City divides different types and geographical areas of flood mitigation among different agencies. Mr. Hill asked whether the FRP covers all types of the flooding. The City indicated different types of flooding and floodplains will be represented in the FRP, and while various



agencies tackle different tasks, the City agencies collectively work together to provide integrated solutions.

## 6. Flood Mitigation Grant Program

**Ms. Montoney provided an update and asked for feedback via email about the City's new proposal for providing greater grant match caps for condominiums.** The City would like to present this proposal to Council in Fall 2023. The City will conduct community outreach starting this summer.

- a. The City's grant program and this amendment to the current program is novel. Many cities do not offer reimbursement for improvements to private properties, so precedents for funding are hard to find.
- b. The City is removing the requirement for documentation of past flooding.
- c. **The new proposed cap for a condominium association = \$5k match per individual unit's flood mitigation improvements + \$25k match for collective common area flood mitigation improvements. The matching funding is 50/50, with 50% paid by the private property owner.**
  1. Funding for unit-specific improvements can be applied for by individual owners or "bundled" as an HOA, which is particularly helpful if improvements protect multiple units.
- d. Mr. Drudi asked if condominiums can apply as soon as Council approves. The City indicated yes.
- e. Ms. Leonard asked if the \$25k is per common area element, or for all common area within a condo building. The City indicated the \$25k is for all common area combined.
- f. Mr. Sands asked if the City projected how much this proposal would cost the City. The City indicated there has recently been a 400% increase in stormwater credit program participation with the latest update, and **is working on projections for this proposed program modification.** The FY2024 budget for the grant program is \$750k.
- g. Ms. Shew indicated that condominium buildings and townhome sizes and configurations highly vary and asked how the City thought through those differences. The City indicated that no other programs exist in the country of which the City's program could be based. However, multiple configurations were assessed, and this proposed approach serves as a middle ground for assistance and equity.
- h. Mr. Druid and Ms. Leonard expressed that they believe the \$25k maximum match is too low. Ms. Leonard indicated that the money spent by her condo association was \$250k for repair of flood damage and flood mitigation. Mr. Skrabak indicated that the grant only covers the cost of flood mitigation to prevent future damage and does not cover damages from flooding. The City also indicated that the \$25k per association was set to allow a larger amount of associations to get assistance from a limited amount of available City funding for the program. Mr. Maines also clarified that the \$25k match is for common areas alone. Individual condo owners are also allowed to apply for \$5k separately if their unit is at risk of flooding. As such, individual condo owners could get \$5k plus a portion of the common area match.
- i. A single commercial building would be able to apply for the \$5k as an individual property owner plus the \$25k for common area. Ms. Leonard does not recommend opening up the \$25k common area match to commercially owned properties. Mr. Maginniss indicated that commercially-owned properties also pay taxes.
- j. The Ad Hoc Group asked how the \$25k for common areas was derived. The City indicated that the number is based loosely on Miami's match of \$20k, but otherwise precedents could not be found or derived. \$25k is proposed as a starting point and may evolve with the program. The City is also



looking at raising the threshold based on income requirements. The City reiterated that the formulas previously proposed in prior meetings did not yield reasonable, equitable results. The City also emphasized that the City does not subsidize other types of disasters.

- k. The City will conduct community outreach for this proposal. The intent is to gather feedback during the summer about the proposed changes ahead of presenting to Council, then to inform residents about the change to the program if it is approved in the fall. **The Ad Hoc Group asked to be invited to all public outreach events.**

## **7. Equity Map**

- a. Ms. Shew presented and visually showed the new Racial Equity Index Map presented on the City website. <https://www.alexandriava.gov/equity/equity-index-map>. The tool spatially shows a number of different metrics in the categories of Neighborhood Composition, Education, Economic Opportunity, Accessibility & Mobility, Neighborhood Quality & Livability, and Household Resources. These metrics help define vulnerability and equity across the City.
- b. For public outreach, certain metrics show areas of Alexandria have varying levels of English proficiency and access to internet.
- c. The information provided is based on census information and neighborhood plans.
- d. Dr. Medina cautioned overlaying this information with the projects in the Flood Action Dashboard since the dashboard only shows one dot per project and does not show the area of influence and impact for each project.
- e. Mr. Maines indicated this information is useful for supporting grant applications.
- f. Mr. Skrabak indicated the information and features presented will evolve and be refined over time. It may be used further in the future to help prioritize projects. **Ms. Shew indicated the City is looking for input on the tool.**

## **8. Group Brainstorming about Communications**

- a. **Mr. Hill asked the Ad Hoc Group to brainstorm ideas of how to engage residents and solicit input from the community regarding the large capacity projects that are starting.**
- b. Mr. Hill shared an example of a monthly civic association newsletter that includes a stormwater update every month. Mr. Hill also provides a stormwater update at each civic association meeting. These actions could be done with other civic associations.
- c. **Mr. Hill asked the Ad Hoc Group to list civic associations that should be engaged for the large capacity projects.** A full list of associations can be found in the slides, but not all may be impacted by the large capacity projects. Once the list is established, Mr. Hill asked the Ad Hoc Group to **identify the best ways to engage the shortlist of associations since they operate in different ways.**
- d. Mr. Drudi indicated he provides periodic updates to the Federation of Civic Associations. Not all associations are part of the federation. He indicated that oftentimes, leaders of the association attend public outreach meetings and will provide updates to their members. Not all residents need to attend outreach events, as long as the material and information is effectively conveyed through neighborhood association leaders.
- e. Mr. Sands asked if Mr. Hill thinks certain associations have not been engaged that should be. Mr. Hill indicated yes. **Mr. Sands recommended overlaying the areas of flooding with the civic associations to help identify which ones to engage.**



- f. Ms. Shew indicated a lot of communication can occur via word of mouth, at community events, and via social media/newspaper. Residents may not have time to attend meetings or events.
- g. Mr. Hill indicated signs in the field are highly effective.
- h. Ms. Leonard indicated two-month lead times and multiple reminders are needed to encourage residents to attend a meeting or event in person. She also indicated participation may be low right now since major flooding has not occurred recently.
- i. Mr. Drudi asked if the Ad Hoc Group has been renewed and recommended **Mr. Hill reach out to Councilman Chapman to have the Ad Hoc Group renewal added to the Council docket for the 6/17/23 meeting.**

#### **9. Public Comment**

- a. Rose Esber: Ms. Esber lives in an 8-unit condominium at 1707 King St. The building and a nearby hotel are located at the downstream end of the Hooffs Run Culvert near the King St. Metro Station. The condominium building has flooded multiple times, including flooding of the parking garage and elevators. The building has spent nearly \$300k for a commercial floodgate, which required a special assessment and puts significant financial burden on owners. Ms. Esber feels that condominium owners are subsidizing grants for single family homes and that \$25k for condominiums is not sufficient.
- b. Mr. Guarinello (via chat) similarly expressed that the proposed condominium grant match is not high enough and asked for exceptions to be considered. **He will reach out directly to the City for further discussion.**

#### **10. Adjourn**

Meeting Adjourned at 8:03pm by unanimous vote.