



# Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group

February 16, 2022 | 7:00 p.m. | Virtual Meeting

## Minutes

### Advisory Group Members Present:

|   |                |   |                         |
|---|----------------|---|-------------------------|
| P | John Chapman   | P | Howard “Skip” Maginniss |
| P | Dino Drudi     | P | Brian Sands             |
| P | Charlotte Hall | P | Christine Thuot         |
| P | John Hill      | P | Katherine Waynick       |
| P | Cheryl Leonard |   |                         |

P = Present    A = Absent

**Staff Present:** Dan Medina, Stormwater Program Manager; Jesse Maines, T&ES Division Chief, Stormwater Management; Erin Bevis-Carver, T&ES Division Chief, Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure; Jessica Lassetter, T&ES; Mitch Dillon, DPI; Amanda Dolasinski, T&ES; Sabu Paul, DPI; Jonathan Whiteleather, DPI; Brian Rahal Stormwater Program Section Lead; William Skrabak, Deputy Director of Infrastructure and Environmental Quality; Terry Suehr, Director of Project Implementation; Camille Liebnitzky, Green Infrastructure Program Manager

### Action Items are in bold

The meeting began at 7:13 p.m.

#### 1. **Electronic Meeting Notice**

Mr. Chapman began the meeting by reading the electronic meeting notice and went over general housekeeping items.

#### 2. **Approval of the December 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Drudi asked whether comments on the meeting minutes have been addressed. Dr. Medina confirmed that they have.

Motion to approve meeting minutes from 12/8/21: John Hill

Second: Brian Sands

Vote: Unanimous

#### 3. **Chair’s Comments**

- a. Item tabled since Mr. Maginniss could not be present for this portion of the meeting.

#### 4. **Staff Update: General**

- a. Dr. Medina introduced himself, RK&K staff, and City staff who are providing updates. Note: RK&K is contracted to provide communications support for the City of Alexandria.

#### 5. **Staff Update: Large capacity projects**

- a. Dr. Paul explained there are three large capacity projects currently in progress. Two are in the Four Mile Run watershed near Glebe Road, Commonwealth Ave, and Ashby St.



The third project is located within Hooff's Run watershed. The request for qualifications for the first two projects was released in Jan 2022. A component of the first two projects also received a Community Flood Preparedness Fund Grant (CFPF) from Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) (<https://www.alexandriava.gov/stormwater-management/stormwater-management-funding>). A second DCR CFPF grant awarded about \$500k for an early stage of the fourth large-capacity project -- Edison and Dale -- for planning, design, and implementation. The remaining seven large capacity projects are under investigation.

**Member Input:** Mr. Hill indicated the large capacity projects are Design-Bid-Build and asked whether using Design-Build or another procurement model could expedite project implementation. Dr. Medina indicated the City has requested that bidders propose methods and technologies to expedite schedules. The current schedule shown is conservative.

Councilman Chapman asked whether other procurement methods were considered and whether the Design-Bid-Build method will definitely be used. Dr. Medina indicated that procurement methods could be adjusted. Ms. Suehr indicated that the City evaluates and selects procurement processes carefully and believes Design-Bid-Build to be the preferred method.

#### **6. Staff Update: Neighborhood spot improvement projects**

- a. Mr. Dillon introduced smaller neighborhood projects which address localized flooding and the process by which they are identified and addressed. The first batch of spot projects were recently completed, but more projects will be developed in the future.
- b. Mr. Dillon presented which spot improvement projects are currently under investigation, in planning, in design, and under construction.
- c. Mr. Dillon showed what the design and construction process for inlet capacity projects look like through a video. The intent of these projects is to enlarge the size of the inlets to allow the roadway to drain more efficiently.

#### **7. Staff Update: Sanitary sewer updates**

- a. Ms. Bevis-Carver gave an update on the city-wide sanitary sewer asset renewal program, which began in 2021. Phase 1 (Del Ray, east of Commonwealth Ave) inspections are complete and inspection data is under review. Phase 1 results will be presented in a report in Spring 2022 and posted on the City website. Phase 2 inspections (Del Ray, west of Commonwealth Ave) will start in March 2022 and involve opening manholes and using specialized cameras (CCTV) to view sewer pipe conditions.
- b. Ms. Bevis-Carver discussed Nethergate and Pitt/Gibbon, two areas in the combined sewer system with recurring overland flooding. The City has completed an investigation of these two areas during which they met with the community, collected data, and performed engineering studies. The City is currently evaluating the alternatives to select the most appropriate project(s) for more detailed design and construction. The projects will be funded from the Sanitary Capital Improvement Program.
- c. Ms. Bevis-Carver indicated that the City is developing a hydraulic model of the combined sewer system. Currently the model covers two thirds of the area. The City is developing a request for qualifications to hire a consultant to expand the model to include



the remaining one third of the combined sewer system. Developing the model will not impact currently scheduled projects and will be used to identify additional areas needing improvement.

**Member Input:** Ms. Thuot sent the Pitt/Gibbon report provided by the City to the community. Ms. Thuot asked where the Pitt/Gibbon project fits with the timing of all the other projects. Per Ms. Bevis-Carter, the Pitt/Gibbon combined sewer project will not compete with other projects due to the separate funding source.

Dr. Medina clarified that the designation of spot improvement versus large capacity project does not have a bearing on project timelines or priority.

Mr. Drudi indicated that the Pitt/Gibbon project should not be completed after the other previously identified large capacity projects. Dr. Medina said this is not the case and that the project is currently in the planning phase.

Ms. Bevis-Carver clarified that there is just one combined sewer project currently planned in Pitt/Gibbon, despite reference to the project as both a small spot improvement and a large capacity project within the presentation. Project to be selected following an evaluation of identified alternatives.

Mr. Maginniss asked whether there are shorter-term solutions that can be implemented more quickly due to the concern of community contact with sewage in the area of Pitt/Gibbon. Ms. Bevis-Carver clarified that other areas of the City are being exposed to sewage through sewer backups or overflows from combined sewers over capacity. Shorter-term solutions are under consideration but have not been identified yet.

Ms. Waynick indicated that there are both large capacity and spot improvement projects proposed in her neighborhood, which causes confusion. Ms. Waynick asked the City for a status update on the full list of flood-related issues and projects within the City. Dr. Medina indicated the City is currently developing a story map to illustrate where the projects are in relation to various parts of the City.

Mr. Drudi asked what is meant by the term “hydraulic”. Per Ms. Bevis-Carver, hydraulic models assess flow in the pipe system and whether water is staying in or coming out of the sewer pipes. Dr. Medina added that the term “hydraulics” refers to the movement of water over land, be it in pipes, channels or streams.

#### **8. Staff Update: Master baseline schedule**

- a. Dr. Medina explained that the City is developing a detailed Master Baseline Schedule which summarizes the numerous steps, including technical and stakeholder engagement steps, needed to implement spot improvement and large capacity projects.
- b. The master baseline schedule has been simplified for presentation to the Advisory Group, but shows anticipated dates for planning, design procurement, design, construction



procurement, and construction. The schedule shown is not comprehensive and more projects are being added.

- c. The first set of projects shown are in motion. The second set of projects shown are on deck, meaning they have been identified but will likely start in 2025. The final slide shows projects in the pipeline, meaning they have been identified but will likely start in 2026 or beyond.
- d. Dr. Medina presented items that could delay or accelerate design and construction of City projects.

**Member Input:** Ms. Waynick asked whether the schedule is in calendar years. Dr. Medina confirmed.

Mr. Maginniss indicated that it will be many years before some neighborhoods see large capacity projects built. What additional relief can be offered in the short term? Dr. Medina indicated the spot improvements are intended to provide short-term benefits while the large capacity projects come online. The City also provides a 50% matching grant, up to \$5,000, for flood mitigation on private property. The City is also looking for ways to compress timelines, such as using on-call contractors to reduce contract procurement times.

Mr. Hill asked whether the number of 311 complaints associated with each project could be shown with the schedule as a measure of the severity that each project would solve. Dr. Medina indicated that 311 activity is not a measure of severity but instead of citizens awareness of the 311 system and ability to use it.

Ms. Waynick asked what a check valve is and how it differs from an inlet capacity project. Ms. Suehr indicated that a check valve is a backflow preventer. It prevents water from flowing through a pipe in the wrong direction. Ms. Waynick asked if adding check valves could cause flooding downstream of the valve. Ms. Waynick is specifically concerned about residents between Hume and Commonwealth/Glebe and would like the modeling results that show flooding will not worsen after implementing the Hume Ave check valve project. Mr. Maines indicated that check valves are coupled with pipe capacity improvements like the Hume Ave capacity project to prevent this issue. Ms. Waynick expressed concern that the check valve is being installed before the bypass, as shown in the schedule. Mr. Maines mentioned that the schedule will be updated to show the check valve being constructed along the same timeline as the Hume Ave bypass. The City will review the schedule and verify that flooding will not worsen.

Ms. Thuot asked if the spot improvement projects and the Pitt/Gibbon combined sewer project can be added to the master schedule and sent to the Advisory Group before the next meeting. Dr. Medina indicated that these projects will be added to the schedule, which will be published on the website in approximately three weeks. Dr. Medina will inform Mr. Maginniss when the schedule is published.



Mr. Drudi asked why the design phase is longer than the construction phase. Dr. Medina indicated that the longer design time shown in the master schedule is correct. Many factors need to be considered during design, including climate change, modeling, verification that flooding considerations will not inadvertently be made worse in other parts of the system, etc.

**9. Staff Update: State and federal grant funding**

- a. Mr. Maines explained that VA Community Flood Preparedness Funding (CFPF) has been awarded for the Commonwealth/Glebe/Ashby large capacity project, the Edison and Dale St large capacity project, and the Waterfront project.
- b. The City is currently submitting CFPF applications for the Mount Vernon/Edison dual pipe replacement and inlet capacity/new inlet program. The applications are being routed through City Council and are due April 8, 2022.

**10. Staff Update: City Flood Grant Program**

- a. Up to 150 applications have been received for the City Flood Grant Program. \$750,000 is available. \$104k has been paid out. The City is working to expedite payouts and expects total funding to increase next fiscal year.

**Member Input:** Ms. Thuot indicated neighbors are having issues with the City Flood Grant Program. They do not understand what is requested and are frustrated that additional information seems to be required throughout the application process instead of up-front. Specifically, the need for receipts is a point of confusion.

Ms. Thuot asked how many people have been paid so far. Mr. Maines indicated that fewer than half have been paid. **Mr. Maines will reach out to Ms. Thuot to get more recommendations for how to streamline the approach. The goal is to process applications in less than ten days and be clearer about requirements.**

Ms. Thuot asked whether the City fees are being waived. Mr. Maines indicated that the fees are not waived but are reimbursable. This fee is required to pay expenses of the permitting processes. Ms. Thuot indicated that it would be best if there was a separate funding stream for fees so residents get the fullest possible reimbursement. Mr. Maines also indicated the City would like to provide credits through the stormwater utility fee as an alternative to the grant program.

Mr. Drudi asked if the grant matching funds will expire with the fiscal year in four months. Mr. Maines indicated that the funding is appropriated into the Capital Improvement Program, so it will not be lost and will be added to funding for the next fiscal year.

**11. Staff Update: Communications and public information**

- a. Ms. Dolasinski explained that the City has been focusing on three lines of effort: Flood Action Newsletter, Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), and Video Storytelling.



- b. The handle for flood-related social media is T&ES, which is different than the City account.
- c. Ms. Dolasinski conducted a poll for how the Advisory Group would like to receive Flood Action initiative information: Advisory Committee meetings, newsletter, social media, website. Mr. Drudi prefers the meetings. Mr. Maginniss likes all avenues. The poll indicated the newsletter is preferred.
- d. The City is issuing a VA Flood Awareness Proclamation on March 8 during the City Council legislative meeting and ahead of Flood Awareness Week March 13-19, 2022. The City will host a social media campaign during the week to provide information about flood mitigation and protection.

## **12. Legislative update from the Ad Hoc Group**

- a. Ms. Waynick indicated there were six bills recently on the VA House floor related to flooding.
- b. House bill 448 proposed by Delegate Bennett-Parker relates to the authority of local jurisdictions to better control development which could impact flooding. The bill would allow for stormwater management requirements on properties that are <2,500 square feet. This bill did not pass the Counties, Cities and Towns, sub-committee.
- c. House bill 516 and 847 both made it out of committee and passed the house. They will be voted on in the state senate. 516 relates to budget for flood resiliency. 847 would establish a single authority for resiliency and flooding, not just coastal flooding.
- d. The recently elected Governor Youngkin has made clear that he does not want Virginia to remain in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).

## **13. Questions and public comment**

- a. Mr. Drudi asked what the scope of the Advisory Group is and whether it overlaps with the Waterfront Plan's subcommittee where flooding is concerned. Dr. Medina indicated that DPI is organized to deliver the Waterfront and the Flood Action programs most effectively. Both programs happen to address flooding. Councilman Chapman indicated the initial focus of the Advisory Group was to address inland flooding, with the understanding that the group could also look at coastal flooding. The intent is not for two groups of citizens to fight for the same funding when there could be collaboration. Councilman Chapman indicated he can help coordinate these groups and discuss further with Mr. Drudi.
- b. Mr. Drudi expressed that the Advisory Group's efforts are limited by perception that coastal flooding is not in their scope and that Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) has control over certain flood-prone sites. Councilman Chapman indicated there is a longer and more complex history that has led to OHA's role in those sites. Dr. Drudi indicated it would be helpful to have a chart of flooding types and which group is responsible for spearheading mitigation.
- c. Mr. Tom Slayton indicated the master schedule shown on slide 14 shows delays compared to prior timelines presented by the City and is particularly concerned about the delays on the North Overlook project. Mr. Slayton expressed that he and some citizens are concerned about the perceived lack of progress and transparency despite increases



and proposed increases in the stormwater utility fee. Dr. Medina indicated that the master schedule to be published in three weeks will show the full list of projects.

- d. Mr. Maginniss will reach out to the Advisory Group members separately to discuss his chairman remarks and action items.

#### **14. Adjourn**

- a. Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.
- b. Motion: Katherine Waynick
- c. Second: John Chapman?

## **Meeting Chat Transcript**

01:46:41 Katherine Waynick:

Additional feedback on the grant program - the marketing sheets are fantastic but it should be noted that the list there isn't exhaustive

01:47:47 Katherine Waynick:

neighbors have been sending me questions about what is included that are shown on the website but not on the sheet. Understand that the sheet has limited space but making it clear that the website has a more complete list may be helpful.

01:52:32 Jesse Maines:

Good point on the list not being exhaustive.

01:54:03 Jesse Maines:

As we are hiring more staff, we will be able to provide more support in letting folks know what is eligible on a case by case if not listed, and we can include. List should be iterative.