



Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group

February 23, 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	V	Brian Sands
P	John Hill (Chair)	P	Janette Shew
A	Cheryl Leonard	A	Christine Thuot
		P	Katherine Waynick (Vice-Chair)

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

Staff Present: Jesse Maines, T&ES, Stormwater Management; Jonathan Whiteleather, DPI; Mitch Dillon, DPI; Terry Suehr, DPI; Bill Skrabak, Camille Liebnitzky, T&ES/SWM

Action Items are in bold. As a general action item, acronyms at future presentations will be spelled out for clarity.

The meeting began at 6:00pm. With 5 Ad Hoc Group members present in person, quorum was met.

1. **Electronic Meeting Notice**

Mr. Hill read the electronic meeting notice.

2. **Approval of the October 20, 2022 Minutes**

The meeting minutes from the October 20, 2022 meeting were reviewed, but could not be approved since quorum was not achieved.

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

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

- a. Commonwealth/ E. Glebe & Commonwealth & Ashby (\$50M): This project is under design. Survey will be completed end of March 2023, then followed with geotechnical testing and 30% design (Fall 2023). The public kickoff for the project occurred last week and is posted on the project website: [Commonwealth, Ashby, Glebe Flood Mitigation Project | City of Alexandria, VA \(alexandriava.gov\)](https://www.alexandriava.gov/development/development-projects/commonwealth-ashby-glebe-flood-mitigation-project)
- b. Hooffs Run Culvert Bypass (\$60M) is in price negotiations for the design contract. The City anticipates design start within the next couple of weeks. Mr. Hill indicated that last week, Dr. Medina met with the Rosemont Civic Association’s Infrastructure team. The Rosemont Civic Association is considering creating a stakeholder group for this project, to coordinate with other infrastructure projects occurring in the Rosemont area as well. Mr. Drudi asked whether the current negotiation is for design services only, and whether there will be a separate bid/contract negotiation for construction. Mr. Whiteleather confirmed that there are two separate negotiations, and that construction procurement will begin after design completion. Ms. Suehr clarified that designers for City and federal projects are selected based on qualifications (not price). Mr. Maginniss asked



whether designers can also oversee construction. The City indicated that the designer is often involved during construction to review changes that may occur in the field and to review and approve shop drawings for structures, pipes, etc. While the designer may provide construction management, it is typically a third party.

Mr. Whiteleather provided updates for **Combined Sewer System (CSS) Projects**.

- a. Pitt & Gibbon (\$11.5M) is in the planning phase. The City and consultant are reviewing additional alternatives in an on-going study.
- b. Nethergate (\$5M) is in the planning phase. The City is reviewing the Alternatives Analysis and will select an alternative for further design.

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

- a. The City has updated the Master Schedule (name to be changed to Stormwater Capacity Project Schedule), available online: [2022-12-30 Final Draft SW CIP Program Schedule.xlsx](#) ([alexandriava.gov](#)). The City plans to update the Schedule and Project Dashboard on a quarterly basis.
- b. Generally Spot Improvement projects are moving ahead, though some schedules have shifted due to unexpected conditions, permits, or grant funding. See slides for list of projects with schedules that are expedited or extended.
- c. Three new Spot Improvement projects have been added to the City's list, two projects have been suspended since further investigation has not identified a project, and six projects have adjusted start dates that depend on implementation of the Hooff's Run Culvert Bypass for capacity (see slides). Without Hooff's Run Culvert Bypass in place, these projects could potentially cause worsened flooding for downstream neighbors.
- d. Mr. Maginniss asked whether the significant effort to investigate existing sewers with CCTV (closed circuit television footage) will be used to inform future projects or current projects. Mr. Maines indicated that the CCTV footage helps inform current projects, future projects, and ongoing maintenance. Mr. Maginniss asked whether the CCTV work is near completion and if it covers the entire City. Mr. Maines and Mr. Dillon indicated that the work is focused on priority flood-prone areas (both stormwater and combined sewer area) and could occur in multiple rounds, especially after storm events to check for debris. Mr. Drudi asked whether the inspections and maintenance hours for multiple rounds are accounted for in the City budget. Mr. Maines indicated that while the City stormwater maintenance program continues to focus on proactive and reactive work, further formalizing the work is something the City is working on, so the approach is evolving. The City is currently collecting data regarding level of effort for future planning purposes for the State of Good Repair.
- e. Mr. Sands asked what SD stands for in the slides. Mr. Dillon indicated SD stands for "Storm Drain".
- f. Mr. Sands asked what the timeline is for designing and installing the Hooff's Run Culvert Bypass, which six spot improvement projects are dependent on. Mr. Whiteleather indicated that construction is anticipated to start mid-2026 and end in early 2028. Mr. Dillon indicated that the City plans to complete design for the six projects before 2028 so that construction of the six projects starts soon after the Hooff's Run Culvert Bypass is complete.
- g. Ms. Waynick indicated that the community likes the CCTV inspections and focus on maintenance, since it noticeably helps reduce flooding. Ms. Waynick asked whether there is a maintenance



schedule being followed. The City indicated that that City aims to investigate 10% of the storm sewers each year, and rotates which pipes are inspected. The City also focuses on flood-prone pipes and hot spots.

Mr. Maines provided an update on **Flood Action Communication**

- a. Ms. Dolasinski is no longer with the City and leading the Flood Action Communication. Various T&ES City staff and RK&K are providing support until the Flood Action Communications position is filled. The Flood Action newsletter for February was published before Ms. Dolasinski left. **The City will send Mr. Drudi a hard copy of the newsletter as requested.** The City will continue to develop content for the Flood Action Newsletter, RK&K will lay out the newsletter, and the City will distribute the newsletter.

4. Overview of Proposed Stormwater Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024

Chairman Hill and Mr. Maines provided an introduction of the Stormwater Capital Improvement Program Budget. The intent is for the Ad Hoc Group to share the information presented with interested community members. The proposed FY24 budget presented is from the FY 2023 approved 10-year Plan. **See slides for specific budget numbers.**

- a. The plan includes operating (maintenance, administration) and capital (design and construction funding for flood mitigation projects) costs.
- b. The plan includes revenue from the Stormwater Utility Fee (\$19M from ~43,300 properties) and general obligation bonds (\$34M). “Calculated” properties listed on the slide are non-residential properties. Mr. Hill emphasized that the stormwater utility program is much larger than it has been in the past. Mr. Drudi asked if grant funding is included in revenues. The City indicated that grant funding is not reflected on the slides, but can be later included.
- c. Mr. Maginniss asked whether the City considered how the Stormwater Utility Fee Credits would reduce revenue. Mr. Maines indicated that when the Stormwater Utility Fee Credit Manual was updated, the impact to revenue versus expenditures from this program was assessed. Ms. Liebnitzky also indicated that there has been a 400% increase in the number of Stormwater Utility credit applicants since last year, so the program is growing. As the City finishes processing credit applications for this round, they will have more accurate data on whether revenue is sufficient to cover this growing program. **The Ad Hoc Group asked that payout for the program be accounted for in expenditures (Note: Flood Grant program is already included as an expenditure). The City will include.**
- d. The City presented the breakdown of expenditures (\$53M) between capital projects, operations, and debt service. Most of the cost is for capital projects. The slide also clarifies what is included under Operations. **Ms. Shew asked that the City more clearly show that revenue equals expenditures, and clarify that operations includes CCTV and maintenance of pipes. In addition, the Group requested that acronyms (SW, BMP) be spelled out. Ms. Waynick also indicated that explaining the difference between water quality and water quantity projects is important for the community and needs to continue to be repeated.**
- e. Mr. Maines presented a slide which breaks down how the \$39M for capital projects will be spent, including for large capacity projects, 14 spot projects, some maintenance, the Lucky Run Stream Restoration (construction), and Green Infrastructure planning.



- f. The Ad Hoc Group discussed that the Stormwater Utility Program is only four years old and has grown substantially. **Ms. Shew recommended showing a visual history of how the budget has grown and changed over time when sharing information with the public.** Per Mr. Maines, the history could start in 2010 when the City first proposed a SWU for flooding, include the CASSCA study, include the mandates from the Chesapeake Bay TMDL (total maximum daily loads) program for water quality, and now include water quantity flooding mitigation projects. Ms. Waynick indicated this history could also help the public understand increases to the Stormwater Utility Fee in the future. Mr. Drudi indicated that one slide shows \$42M for capital projects and another shows \$39M. The City confirmed that capital project expenditures is \$39.1M and **the slides will be updated.**
- g. Mr. Maines provided a funding schedule for the two active large capacity projects (Commonwealth, Ashby, Glebe and Hooff's Run Culvert Bypass). The table on the slide shows a funding (revenue) schedule, not an expenditure schedule. Revenue must be obtained (authorized by City Council) in full before contracts can be executed (funds are obligated) for design and construction. During design and construction, contractors are paid monthly in accordance with the work completed from the obligated funds. The City emphasized that project budgets include the cost of design in addition to construction. The City also explained that costs are estimated – contractors for design and construction negotiate costs. The City estimates inflation in their funding schedules, but inflation is variable. The Ad Hoc Group requested that the slide be clarified before sharing more widely with the public.
- h. **The Ad Hoc Group indicated that they would like to post a polished version of this information on the Flood Action website, and on social media. Mr. Maginniss requested that the material be reviewed by a legal team before release.** Ms. Waynick indicated this material is important for helping residents understand rate increases and what the funding is being used for. She emphasized that projections shown account for projected increases in Stormwater Utility rates.
- i. Mr. Maines provided a funding schedule for spot improvement projects. **The Ad Hoc Group requested the message that continuous funding is allocated every year to address 311 issues that arise over time be added to the slide.** Mr. Maginniss emphasized that the funding schedule does not reflect how much projects will actually cost. Project costs may increase due to unforeseen conditions, such as contaminated soils.
- j. **The Ad Hoc Group will include a similar breakdown slide for the combined sewer projects.**
- k. Mr. Maines provided a funding schedule for maintenance activities. Mr. Drudi commented that the projection varies significantly year-to-year. Mr. Maines indicated that Lake Cook and Ben Brennan Pond retrofits for the Bay TMDL require dredging for maintenance, which results in cost spikes since this effort is not annual. Mr. Drudi asked if the table shows that Hooff's Run Culvert Maintenance will only occur once every five years. The City indicated yes -if additional service is desired by the public, additional funding needs to be obtained. The funding schedule also does not currently account for maintenance of the future large capital projects.
- l. Mr. Maines provided a funding schedule for water quality / regulatory compliance projects. The Strawberry Run and Taylor Run stream restoration projects were paused by City Council while coordination with stakeholder groups continue. Lucky Run Stream Restoration construction will start shortly as designed.
- m. The Ad Hoc Group indicated that reviewing the budget breakdown was helpful. **Mr. Sands asked the Ad Hoc Group to continue to educate the community with simplified, but sufficiently nuanced information.**



5. Discussion of Committee's Annual Report

Chairman Hill indicated the Ad Hoc Group must provide a report during the budget season summarizing their work and findings. **Chairman Hill asked that the Group develop the report so they can review and approve the report at the April meeting.** Mr. Drudi indicated a five-page report is appropriate.

- a. Chairman Hill provided a proposed outline for a report (see slides).
- b. **Mr. Drudi asked that the combined sewer projects be incorporated into the report.**
- c. **Mr. Drudi indicated that the report should also request a renewal or permanent continuation of the Ad Hoc Group. Ms. Waynick indicated this will be addressed in the Summary Statement.**
- d. Mr. Drudi indicated that he believes the main value of the Ad Hoc Group is public interaction and would like a summary of this included in the report. **The Ad Hoc Group will continue to think about what will be included, develop content, and discuss how to collaborate in a way that meets group bylaws.**

6. Flood Mitigation Grant Program – Condominium Owners Formula

Mr. Maines described considerations for expanding the Flood Action Grant Program cap for condominiums.

- a. Condominium owners can apply for the grant. however, the \$5,000 cap is often not sufficient for protection of common areas.
- b. Mr. Drudi previously proposed two possible grant cap formulas for common areas (formulas 1 and 2 on slide 3). The City explored and revised the formula (formula 3 on slide 4). Mr. Maines let the group know that “ERU” is equivalent residential unit. To test the formulas, the City ran examples with representative building types in the City. The resulting grant caps are highly variable and in some cases are exorbitant, therefore **the City is reconsidering the formulas and approach as the slides show it does not equitably address each building type. The City will provide an update before and at the next Ad Hoc Group meeting.**
- c. Mr. Sands asked why the formulas divide impacted units by two. Ms. Liebnitzky indicated this is because condominium units have common walls. Mr. Sands indicated that argument could also be made for townhomes and would like the City to reconsider its incorporation. Mr. Drudi indicated he included a division by two since his formulas more explicitly accounted for common areas.
- d. **Mr. Sands asked the City to look at caps per unit rather than total caps**, since total caps could disadvantage buildings with a large number of units.
- e. The City and Ad Hoc Group recognized that this grant program is highly novel, as the Ad Hoc Group asked what other localities were doing and the City reminded the Ad Hoc that this is the first flood grant program of its kind in the state. The City is freely sharing information with other cities who are starting to do similar programs, but precedents are not common.

7. Public Comment

- a. Resident Art Guarinello: The eight condo owners of 7 Prince Street building have experienced past flooding and property damage, resulting in them spending \$260,000 for a flood barrier. The building



also requires sump pumps upgrades. The building has not flooded in the past 1.5 years, however the building is still vulnerable in storms with high intensity. Mr. Guarinello would like his building to be assisted with reimbursement for flood protection measures and an exception to the formula cap. Mr. Drudi asked whether the letter written by the condo association should be entered into the public record of this meeting. **Mr. Guarinello indicated yes.** Resident Earl Franks from 7 Prince Street reiterated Mr. Guarinello's concerns.

- b. Ms. Waynick commented that the City cannot address every single issue in the City. However, there are outliers of buildings that are particularly impacted or are not being addressed with capital improvement projects and would like **the Ad Hoc Group to discuss how to address these outlier issues.**
- c. Resident Jim Burkart of the public asked what can be done for residents waiting for completion of projects that will take years to implement (for example Braddock West and Hooff's Run Culvert Bypass). **The Ad Hoc Group and City are continuing to consider.**
- d. Resident John Craig indicated that flooding is occurring near the Braddock Road Metro station due to curb inlet protection (erosion and sediment control measures) blocking inlets. Per Mr. Drudi, this area has experienced historic flooding and should be a higher priority for the City. **The City will investigate what can be done, however erosion and sediment control is required by state law for construction projects. [The City looked into this and determined that the inlet protection is not needed and can be removed.]** Per Mr. Skrabak, the City previously looked at solutions to flooding at Braddock Road, however the estimated cost of mitigation was high (\$10M) and did not provide equal or greater benefit. The flood mitigation project was removed from the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The new development near Braddock Road is required to provide greater stormwater management than required by City ordinance. Ms. Waynick asked whether the City can request WMATA to provide additional stormwater management to improve flooding. **The City indicated that a study to investigate this area is planned and funding has been allocated for the study.**

8. Public Comment

Meeting Adjourned at 8:40pm.