



Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group

November 8, 2023 | 6:00 p.m. | Hybrid (Virtual and In-Person) Meeting

Minutes

Advisory Group Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

V	Aziz Mahar, T&ES Civil Engineer IV	P	Jesse Maines, T&ES Division Chief, Stormwater Management
P	Brian Rahal, T&ES Civil Engineer IV	V	Jessica Lassetter, T&ES Civil Engineer III
P	Dan Medina, DPI Stormwater Program Manager	P	Jonathan Whiteleather, DPI Technical Project Manager
P	Emma Wheeler, T&ES Communications Office	V	Lisa Jaatinen, T&ES Civil Engineer IV
P	Erin Bevis-Carver, Sanitary Infrastructure Division Chief	A	Mitch Dillon, DPI Associate Technical Project Manager
A	Felicia Montoney, T&ES Management Analyst I	P	Terry Suehr, DPI Director

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting began at 6pm. With 8 Ad Hoc Group members present in person, a quorum was met.

2. Project updates by City Staff

Mr. Whiteleather provided updates on the Flood Action Alexandria Program Progress Report

a. Large capacity projects

- Commonwealth, Ashby, and Glebe: The City received the 30% submission from the designer in September 2023. 60% design is progressing and is anticipated to be complete in February/March 2024. The City is continuing utility coordination. Some utilities may need to be relocated. The geotechnical report is being developed based on site borings completed last month. The geotechnical information will not significantly impact pipe sizes.
 - Mr. Hill asked if a public meeting will be held associated with the design. The City indicated yes. The City will hold a public outreach meeting regarding 30% design in early 2024, then another outreach event will occur after 60% design is completed in March 2024.
- Hooffs Run Culvert Bypass: The fieldwork component of field survey along Russell Road is complete, but additional survey will be needed as alternatives are established. The existing conditions model of the culverts and overland flooding is complete, and evaluation of alternatives is underway. A project community questionnaire is still open until Dec 8th, 2023.



The City is looking for information from residents that are experiencing flooding in the project area.

- Mr. Hill asked whether more public meetings will occur for the Hooffs Run Culvert Project in 2024. The City indicated yes.

- b. Combined sewer system (CSS) area projects
 - Pitt & Gibbon: The City just provided notice to proceed (NTP) for field survey. Survey is important for understanding construction feasibility.
 - Ms. Thuot asked if the site meeting for Pitt & Gibbon has happened. The City indicated yes. This visit was not with the public and was an internal meeting for the City discuss technical issues and to better understand field conditions.
 - Ms. Thuot asked if the document previously shared with the community that provided different alternatives for Pitt & Gibbon is a planning phase document. The City indicated yes.
 - Nethergate: Field survey was completed end of October 2023. After delivery of survey, the City will finalize the alternative and move to the next phase of design.
 - Ms. Thuot asked if 15% design is considered part of the design phase or planning phase, since the master schedule shows some projects that are at 15% design in the planning phase while others are shown in the design phase. The City indicated 15% is considered a concept design regardless of what phase it is part of. Some projects have separate planning tasks (such as the combined sewer projects), whereas others that are on a more aggressive schedule (such as some of the large capacity projects) have just one task for both planning and design. For those with separate planning tasks, the schedule shows 15% design associated with the planning phase.

Dr. Medina provided an update on spot improvement projects.

- a. Please see slides for updates on spot improvement projects. Note that some projects are moving into the construction phase.
- b. Mr. Hill asked whether the latest status of projects is reflected in the Flood Action Dashboard. The City indicated yes.
- c. Mr. Maginniss asked where the Mt. Vernon Cul-de-Sac and Alley project is located. The City indicated this is the cul-de-sac near the King St. Metro close to where Mt. Vernon Ave intersects with the Hooffs Run Greenway and Commonwealth Ave. in the Rosemont neighborhood.

Ms. Jaatinen provided an update on Maintenance Activities.

- a. Inlet cleaning between Linden St. and Rosemont St. is complete.
- b. CCTV to investigate whether cleaning needs to occur in the existing Hooffs Run Culvert is starting in November 2023. Notices and no parking signs will be posted along E. Linden St., where the work will occur from. Mr. Maginniss asked what the limits of CCTV survey will be. **Ms. Jaatinen indicated roughly from Braddock Road to the Duke St outfall, but will follow up with more precise limits. Mr. Hill asked for an update from the City on results when they are known.**



Ms. Bevis-Carver provided an update on the Sanitary Sewer Asset Renewal Program.

- a. The contract for sewer rehabilitation has been awarded for work in Del Ray East. Please see slides for a project map. Work will start in the south and move north. Notifications and no parking signs will be posted in advance of the work. The work to apply the liner will last anywhere from a few to several hours per pipe segment. While the lining work is being done, residents and businesses cannot use plumbing fixtures (for example cannot flush toilets) so that the sanitation lines remain dry and the liner is able to cure properly.

Ms. Wheeler provided an update on Flood Action Communications.

- a. Please see slides for updates. Upcoming communication will focus on revisions to the Stormwater Utility Fee Credit program, which goes into effect December 1, 2023 and the Flood Mitigation Pilot Grant program updates.
- b. Mr. Hill asked what the social media messages coming in from the community were generally about. **Ms. Wheeler will review and provide feedback.**

3. Outreach Update

- a. Ms. Shew indicated there are many forms of neighborhood communication via listservs and other community initiatives that the Ad Hoc Group is already tapping. However, there may be areas of the City which flood but either do not have strong formal community communication systems or that the Ad Hoc Group and City may not know about. **Ms. Shew would like to review where these areas are, as well as talk to councilmembers, to identify flood mitigation needs that have not yet been brought to the City's attention.**
- b. Councilman Chapman supports the initiative to engage other councilmembers and believes acting as a liaison with the community/council members can help further establish the justification for a more permanent Stormwater Advisory Group. **Councilman Chapman indicated a need to engage the City Attorney as well. Ms. Suehr indicated the City has developed a proposed ordinance to make the Ad Hoc Group permanent and can provide to Council for consideration in December.** The City reiterated the importance of the Ad Hoc Group in acting as an extension of the City and community to create effective communication. **Ms. Shew asked each Ad Hoc member to draw where they have communication channels with the community on a map.**

4. Approval of previous meeting minutes

- a. The Ad Hoc Group provided comments on the September meeting minutes:
 - Mr. Drudi requested Mr. Maginniss' attendance be changed to "virtual".
 - Mr. Drudi asked that language be simplified and clarified regarding the Nethergate project's initiation of survey to obtain additional information.
 - Ms. Thuot asked if action items from the minutes can be pulled into a bulleted list at the bottom of the minutes. Depending on the nature of the action items, they can be discussed and crossed off at the next Ad Hoc Meeting.
 - Mr. Drudi had a few minor text edits that were forwarded to the City.
- b. **The Ad Hoc Group will update the September minutes and redistribute. The City will generate a consolidated action item list moving forward.**
- c. The minutes were passed unanimously, with the exception of Mr. Maginniss, who abstained since he was not an Ad Hoc group member at the previous meeting.



5. Letter of support for FY 2025 SW Fee

- a. Mr. Hill indicated the City Manager sent a memo in September to the boards and commissions to provide letters of support by early November 2023 for programs they want to see funded. Mr. Hill circulated the letter of support he submitted on behalf of the Ad Hoc Group to Council regarding the FY 2025 Stormwater Fee increase and asked for feedback. The letter is like the letter provided in the past two years by the Ad Hoc Group for the Stormwater Fee increase, and references the analysis done in the Ad Hoc Group's Annual Report.
- b. Mr. Drudi indicated that if the fee is raised substantially, the benefits to the community should also be increased. He asked whether commercial property owners are eligible for both the Flood Mitigation Grant program and the Stormwater Utility Credit benefits. The City indicated yes, they are treated like individual property owners, not condominiums. Mr. Drudi asked whether commercial properties should be treated like private, single-family owners or whether they should get additional funding like condominiums. The City indicated commercial properties have not applied for the Flood Mitigation Grant program to date. **Mr. Maginniss has not yet been able to reach out to business owners about these programs, but will create a survey and provide more input at subsequent meetings.**

6. Letter of support for application to Community Flood Preparedness Fund

- a. Ms. Lassetter gave an update on the Flood Resiliency Plan, an outline of which was presented at a prior Ad Hoc Group meeting. As a recap, the City does not currently have a formal Flood Resiliency Plan, but has gathered data through community outreach, 311, and the CASSCA effort. However, the City believes there may be flooding and vulnerable infrastructure that the City is not fully aware of and would like to capture a more complete assessment. The major components of this project include community engagement and input, flood modeling, a vulnerability assessment, review of flood-related policies and procedures, and writing of the final plan.
- b. The City is working with their contractor to develop a scope and fee for the work. In the process, the City also found a grant funding opportunity. The State of Virginia is encouraging municipalities to develop Flood Mitigation Plans by providing funding through the Community Flood Preparedness Fund, funded through the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. \$85M is available this round. City Council has approved application for the grant, which is due November 12, 2023. The project is estimated to need \$700k (\$525k in grant funding and \$175k in matching funds from the City). The City is requesting a letter of support from the Ad Hoc Group to include in the application.
- c. Mr. Sands asked how this project will interface with what the Ad Hoc Group is doing since there seems to be synergies. Dr. Medina indicated that the Ad Hoc Group could assist in the Plan's development, particularly with community engagement and general input. Mr. Sands observed that \$700k may not be enough to support the scope. Dr. Medina indicated the Plan is intended as a living document and may be revisited in the future with additional funding.
- d. Mr. Sands noted that First Street Foundation has national flood maps with high resolution that could be helpful for this analysis.
- e. Mr. Maginniss asked how the Flood Resiliency Plan will be integrated with other efforts the City is doing. Dr. Medina indicated the Flood Resiliency Plan will be a part of the City's Climate Action Plan. Mr. Rahal also mentioned that the Flood Resiliency Plan ties with the Northern Virginia



Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and will be coordinated with other agencies (i.e. Office of Emergency Management, Planning and Zoning, etc.).

- f. Ms. Thuot asked whether the combined sewer will be captured in the modeling effort. More specifically, Ms. Thuot asked whether the February 2022 10-year Ditch Hydraulic Model Evaluation of the combined sewer will be included for reference. **Ms. Lassetter confirmed the combined sewer area is included for modeling and will include the Tanyard Ditch Hydraulic Model Evaluation.**
- g. **The Ad Hoc Group unanimously voted to provide a letter of support for the project.**

7. Collaboration with the Environmental Planning Council (EPC)

- a. Ms. Kathy Hofstra introduced EPC to the Ad Hoc Group. EPC is a permanent commission that has been around for several years. Their charter is to advise the City and Council on anything related to the environment. EPC is currently focusing on the climate crisis, particularly ways to reduce emissions related to transportation and building energy. As examples of the types of work EPC does: 1) In early September 2023, EPC sent a letter to the state legislature suggesting climate policy recommendations. 2) EPC has successfully done joint meetings with the Planning Commission and Transportation Commission to write letters of suggestion to Council.
- b. Ms. Hofstra posed that EPC and the Ad Hoc Group could find synergistic opportunities to collaborate on suggestions to Council by attending each other's public meetings as needed. Mr. Drudi proposed that EPC should have a formal seat on the Ad Hoc Group. Ms. Hofstra indicated she can ask if someone would like to sit on the Ad Hoc Group, however coordinated efforts would likely require collaboration meetings instead of a liaison. Dr. Medina indicated officially working to get a formal seat approved may distract from the many other initiatives the Ad Hoc Group is working on. Since the Ad Hoc Group meetings are public, EPC can attend and collaborate. Ms. Hofstra also indicated forming a chair would mean greater time commitments and attendance, which may also pose a challenge. Mr. Sands expressed that EPC is focusing on climate mitigation, whereas the Ad Hoc Group is focusing on climate adaptation. **The Ad Hoc Group and Ms. Hofstra agreed that the two groups will continue to stay in touch and coordinate further if opportunities for collaboration arise.**

8. Follow-on discussion of flow sensors

- a. Mr. Hill expressed that the level sensor and rain gauge on Hooffs Run is excellent since the public can clearly see how rainfall and flooding correlate at a local scale. Mr. Hill asked whether similar sets of instrumentation can be added in other areas that flood in the City.
- b. **Mr. Rahal indicated the City is working to better integrate different sources of monitoring information and can continue to connect information between the Sanitary and Stormwater Divisions at the City.**
- c. Mr. Rahal explained there are different types of sensors that provide different levels of information (flowrate vs. water depth, in real-time vs. delayed).
- d. Ms. Bevis-Carver indicated the sanitary sewer monitoring that is currently in place is not real-time and cannot be used for emergency notifications.
- e. Ms. Thuot indicated the benefit of any data is for residents to look at data and correlate it with flooding so they can follow future rain forecasts to better respond to flooding in real time. This information is helpful while residents wait for flood mitigation projects to be designed and built.



- f. Ms. Thuot asked whether the City's rain gauge data is available to the public. The City indicated yes.
- g. Mr. Sands would like gauges installed on projects to help provide data showing the benefits the projects provide. He expressed the cost of the sensors compared to the project costs does not seem high. Mr. Sands suggested having an app in the future where real-time alerts and data could be provided. Mr. Hill asked the City to estimate what it would take to pilot more sensors in a small area of the City.
- h. Mr. Sands indicated real-time warnings are super helpful to make a highly traumatizing flood event slightly more manageable and to give as much warning to residents as possible. The benefit of some extra warning time more than offsets the inconvenience of false alarms.
- i. Mr. Maginniss indicated that the sensors would likely need to be accompanied by a sophisticated model to provide good real-time predictive warnings. Mr. Maginniss asked if there are benefits to sensors even without the model. Mr. Medina indicated yes; the data is helpful for designing flood mitigation projects.
- j. **The City will look into the costs, effort, and timeframe to incorporate a real-time sensor/monitoring pilot and will report back at the January meeting.**

9. Preparation for Annual Report on the FY2025 Stormwater Budget

- a. Mr. Hill initiated discussion of the Ad Hoc Group's Annual Report. The three main questions the Ad Hoc Group is tasked to evaluate are whether projects are being done in the right places, is funding adequate, and is the City making sufficient progress? Mr. Hill indicated the major theme for 2023 is that large and important projects were started. Mr. Hill indicated another theme is that project design timeframes span many years due to design complexity, so funding and efforts cannot let up. Ms. Suehr added that spending and costs for design is small compared to construction, so the rate of spending will increase substantially when construction of the projects that are currently in design starts.
- b. Mr. Drudi asked whether work near the Timber Branch Culvert is part of another project. The City and Mr. Hill indicated it is part of the Hooffs Run Culvert Bypass project.
- c. **The Ad Hoc Group will continue to work on developing the Annual Report.**

10. Proposed schedule of meetings from now until July 2024

- a. Mr. Hill indicated the budget is proposed in February and approved May 1. There are two public hearings on March 11, 2024 and April 13, 2024. The Ad Hoc Group needs to issue their Annual Report during the budget period between February and May. Mr. Hill suggested not having any more meetings this calendar year, then holding meetings in mid-January, early March, early April, and in May. Mr. Drudi indicated the Annual Report can be developed in the January meeting, so the other meetings may not be necessary. Mr. Maginniss agreed that for the purpose of budget review, there may not be a need for added meetings since most major budget changes are incorporated by February. Mr. Maginniss expressed that some City capital improvement projects without a dedicated funding source have been delayed in recent years since costs exceed available funding. **The Ad Hoc Group agreed to meet in mid-January and stick to a 2-month schedule. Mr. Medina asked that the group establish the dates for the year. Mr. Drudi asked that the day of the week be changed for each meeting to avoid other recurring community meetings with set days of the week.**



11. Public comment

- a. Mr. John Craig agreed that having sensors and monitoring will be helpful to the community. His neighborhood is upstream of the Hooffs Run Culvert. **He is developing a report about potential solutions in the Hooffs Run watershed that he will share with the Ad Hoc Group for review.**

12. Adjourn

- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:15pm by unanimous vote.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Project updates by City Staff

- Mr. Maginniss asked what the limits of CCTV survey will be. Ms. Jaatinen indicated roughly from Braddock Road to the Duke St outfall, but will follow up with more precise limits.
 - o The limits of the inspection are: East Chapman to Duke St.
- Mr. Hill asked for an update from the City on results of the Hooffs Run Culvert maintenance and CCTV when they are known. Ms. Jaatinen to provide.
 - o Expect report in late December
- Mr. Hill asked about the nature of recent messages from the community on social media related to Flood Action Alexandria. Ms. Wheeler will review and provide feedback.

3. Outreach Update

- The Ad Hoc Group will engage City councilmembers and the City Attorney to learn more about flooding areas in the City.
- Ms. Suehr indicated the City has developed a proposed ordinance to make the Ad Hoc Group permanent and can provide to Council for consideration in December.
- Ms. Shew asked each Ad Hoc member to draw where they have communication channels with the community on the map handout.

4. Approval of previous meeting minutes

- The Ad Hoc Group will update the September minutes and redistribute.
- The City will add a consolidated action item list moving forward.

5. Letter of support for FY 2025 SW Fee

- Mr. Maginniss will create a survey for businesses and commercial property owners regarding flood concerns and participation in the Flood Mitigation Grant pilot program, and provide more input at subsequent meetings.

6. Letter of support for application to Community Flood Preparedness Fund

- Ms. Thuot asked whether the February 2022 Tanyard Ditch Hydraulic Model Evaluation of the combined sewer will be included for reference in the overall City flood model. Ms. Lassetter will include.
- The Ad Hoc Group unanimously voted to provide a letter of support for the project and will provide a signature on the letter.

7. Collaboration with the Environmental Planning Council (EPC)

- The Ad Hoc Group and Ms. Hofstra agreed that the two groups will continue to stay in touch and coordinate further if opportunities for collaboration arise.



8. Follow-on discussion of flow sensors

- The City will look into the costs, effort, and timeframe to incorporate a flow monitoring pilot.

9. Preparation for Annual Report on the FY2025 Stormwater Budget

- The Ad Hoc Group will continue to work on developing the Annual Report.

10. Proposed schedule of meetings from now until July 2024

- The Ad Hoc Group agreed to meet in mid-January and stick to a 2-month schedule. Dr. Medina asked that the group establish the dates for the year. Mr. Drudi asked that the day of the week be changed for each meeting to avoid other recurring community meetings with set days of the week.
 - o Schedule is set for remaining meetings.

11. Public comment

- Mr. John Craig is developing a report about potential solutions in the Hooffs Run watershed that he will share with the Ad Hoc Group for review.