

**GREEN BROOK FLOOD CONTROL COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

DRAFT

LOCATION: Virtual Meeting

DATE: December 3, 2025

MEETING CONVENEED: 7:30 PM

Chairman Murray opened the meeting and took role call along with leading the Pledge of Allegiance. He recited compliance with the Open Public Meeting Act.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Raymond Murray . GBFCC Chairman . GB
Paul Woska. GBFCC Vice Chair - Middlesex
Bill Picard. GBFCC Treasurer-Scotch Plains
Edward Wrocenski . USACE
Ray Sullivan . Union County
Rich O'Connor . Engineer, GBFCC
Robert Zucker . Winning Strategies
Mark Krantz . Middlesex

Skip Stabile . North Plainfield
John Ferguson . South Plainfield
Jessica Gonzalez . Scotch Plains
Martha Sides . Scotch Plains
Earl Myers . Scotch Plains
Ken Beck . Middlesex
Mike Schneider . Middlesex
Guido Passucci . Green Brook

MINUTES

October minutes were approved. A copy of minutes is available on the GBFCC website.

CORRESPONDENCE

Chairman Murray reports the Commission has received a list of parcels that USACE would like access to for segment I-J-K design work, along with the associated rights of entry. He will work on obtaining signatures for USACE.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer's report can be found on the GBFCC website. A motion to pay the bills was approved. He noted that the RFP for 2026 Government Relations Consultant and Engineering Consultant was delayed, but will be going out this month, and will be awarded at the next Commission meeting.

The proposed 2026 budget, also on the GBFCC website, includes a 3% increase in the dues of the member municipalities. A motion to approve the budget was approved.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Chairman Murray said there was not an official committee this year, but if anyone is interested in a position on the Board . Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Legislative Liaison, please reach out to him phone or email. His contact information is listed on the GBFCC website. Will look to adopt the new officers at the next meeting.

ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS . Edward Wrocenski, Project Manager

Construction in Middlesex Borough continues:

Segment C2 & H . Contractor has removed the trees and shrubs that are in the way of the levees that are to be worked on in the near future. Have some materials needed for the levees and work can begin there in the next few weeks. Work continues on the two pump stations. Contractor has started digging out the ponding area at 225 Lincoln Avenue.

Segment C1 . Will be awarding a modification to continue work at Segment C1 and extend the line of protection. Soon we will put in the floodwall monoliths.

207 Pond – For those not familiar, this is a property we have been trying to acquire for several years. USACE is pursuing two alternatives to acquire that property. Our real estate team has gotten a new appraisal done and is looking to make an offer to the property owner in early January. They are still hopeful that we can get a deal. If we cannot make a deal, then we will go with the condemnation package, which will go through our Division Headquarters chain of command and up to the ASA's office and then to DOJ. This would be in the March time frame. And then because it is taking so long to acquire the property, we are also looking to redesign that segment of the project and avoid that property all together. Not so easy because some features have already been built. There are many moving parts. The end goal is whichever gets done first, we will go with.

Mr. Murray: We received inquiries from Claire at Middlesex Environmental Commission regarding the tree clearing. If you can get a high-level plan for the features currently under construction and the tree clearing that goes with each, we can get that over to the Commission.

Mr. Mike Schneider, Vice-Chair of the Middlesex Borough Environmental Commission: Is the project using Engineering with Nature guidelines?

Mr. Wrocenski: I am not familiar with that, but I will do some homework. I do know that the only trees being removed are those in the footprint of the project. Anything that we do, we have to get clearance and permits from all the relevant agencies, including DEP.

Mr. Schneider: We were surprised by the size of the clearing, but we are in support of the project. Is the area over by Parker & Denton finished?

Mr. Wrocenski: No, it is not complete. The floodwall is done and continuing from that part will be a levee that meets up with the NJ Transit rail line. There is also a pump station being built there. There will also be some culverts and other structures allowing the water to drain.

Mr. Schneider: We want to do restoration there as soon as possible. The area where there is ponding is pretty devastating to look at as a whole ecosystem has been removed. I know this project has to be done, but maybe they could be more selective in what they are doing. Our assistant administrator goes to meetings every two weeks for progress so I will consult with him as well. They are looking at replacing those trees and wetlands in other parts of the state, but we want to recover that as best as possible.

Another question, is Middlesex the only participating municipality that does not have a Floodplain Ordinance?

Mr. Paul Wolka: I think we are.

Mr. Murray: Tom Slowinski would be the best person to answer. I'm going to guess you may be the only one within the member municipalities, but there are plenty of other municipalities that do not have Floodplain Ordinances in place. It is a valuable resource for the community. It is worth investigating and getting one adopted by your governing body.

Mr. Schneider: We will work on that. We do have environmental concerns about the number of trees taken down at that site, I believe it is about 7,000 to 8,000. Are they counting understory or saplings?

Mr. Murray: I don't know how detailed the survey was.

Mr. Schneider: I will check with Lenny Videll, he is the assistant administrator and goes to the bi-weekly meetings.

Mr. Wrocenski: Every two weeks our construction team along with the contractor gives us an update on work being done. Lenny is on that call, as is Tom Slowinski, and several others. I can extend that link to you as well. We can talk offline if you have any other questions too.

Discussion continued about the importance of the restoration of trees and wetlands, working to find an area where restoration can be done and possibility of incorporating that into the project.

Mr. Murray: Noted that within the Zoom chat there was a question asking, "What is a flood plain ordinance?" It is a set of rules, and best practices for your floodplain. Things that are & are not permitted. It varies from municipality to municipality. Don't try to create from scratch, look to your neighboring municipality to see what is already in place and craft from there.

Mr. Wolska: Regarding the detention culvert that is being built along Cap Lane, is that going to run all the way to the next pump station?

Mr. Wrocenski: That is on the C2 side. There will be a ponding area and a drainage swale. It is to collect the water on the protected side and then that goes to pumping station and gets pumped into the Brook once a rainstorm is over. On the other side, it will reach Drake Ave.

Mr. Wolska: What is going on at the south side of the brook now?

Mr. Wrocenski: Right now, they have dug up all that they can. The trees that were cut down are in a pile of wood chips. Those will be spread in the area. The contractor will continue to dig the drainage area. They wanted to start the levee construction, but unfortunately the levee being excavated did not completely meet the specs, so we are bringing in some fill for that. We are working our way through all of that and do have a source for the levee materials. It should be starting in the next couple weeks on the levee area.

Mr. Wolska: Those large poles that have been dug next to your office, are those ponding areas?

Mr. Wrocenski: Yes, that is a ponding area.

Mr. Wolska: Have they finished taking all the trees down on Cap Lane?

Mr. Wrocenski: For this current segment, yes, all the trees have been taken down. As we get into Segment C4 & C3, then I do not know which trees still have to come down. There could certainly be others to come down.

Ms. Jessica Gonzalez: How do I know if my town has a floodplain ordinance?

Mr. Murrays suggests she contact the town administration or engineering department.

Mr. Beck: With regards to the new and existing pumps being put online, leading towards the Sebrings Mills, is that water all going to be directed to Segment B1?

Mr. Wrocenski: The water is stored in the drainage areas and once the water goes down, it will be pumped into the brook to continue flowing down towards the Raritan River and Newark Bay area.

Mr. Beck: So, it is basically a spillover effect?

Mr. Wrocenski: When the flood waters lower, that water from the interior drainage gets pumped into that brook to continue downstream. It does not go from pump to pump. The pump puts it into the brook. At that point, the flood event will have subsided, and the water be closer to normal surface elevation and it will handle the water being pumped over. It goes downstream and eventually to the ocean.

Mr. Beck: That is all the way into Bound Brook. I am looking at the plans and seeing three additional pumps being built which are to the east of Sebring Mills, which has a currently active pump. Is all this water ultimately culminating at Sebring Mills Bridge and then coming down this little stream into Bound Brook?

Mr. Wrocenski: Yes. The water is pumped downstream and eventually to the ocean.

Mr. Beck: If all the pumps are brought online at the same time, it is going to Bridgewater and the tail end of Greenbrook. I have been dealing with the Army Corps on this velocity issue for over five years, and now this seems as if it is going to culminate and make this severely worse for me and my neighbors.

Mr. Wrocenski: This is a discussion with my H & H Team as to how the timing of the pumps work.

Mr. Beck & Mr. Wrocenski will exchange contact information and discuss further.

Mr. John Ferguson: There are a lot of trees being chopped down along the brook with the EPA work which is being done at the Dubilier site. Have they reached out to you to discuss the work that will need to be done later on?

Mr. Murray: For reference, that portion of the project would be Segment E-F-G. That segment has not been designed yet. Only conceptually designed. When they do the actual design, they would take into consideration what has been done since the original design talks and any remediation that has been done.

Segment C3 & C4

This is by the Park Garden Apartments. We are at 90% design for that area. That will be the next segment of work awarded. I am trying to push the team for 2026, but I think early 2027 is more reasonable estimate.

Segments I-J-K

Ray, thank you for helping with the ROEs. We have about 149 and only missing about two dozen. The team is working to see if we can shift around the borings, so we don't need all those ROEs. This is the start of the design work. We do surveys and borings to get geotechnical information.

We have not started any other future segment design work in the Lower Basin.

Upper Basin

We had a TSP (tentatively selected plan) and it is a non-structural based plan, with some structures such as ring walls. We put together an additional resource request in January and just heard back. That request was withdrawn. It seems we will not be getting the amount of money requested. Internally within our district we are trying to understand how to best move forward. We are working with our engineering team to see what can be changed to still lower risk. The Corps is struggling agency wide as to how to deal with these non-structural plans.

Mr. Murray: A while back we talked about the possibility of trying to move towards something that would include some structural features.

Mr. Wrocenski: As discussed, it was not worth risking the non-structural plan, so we continue to push forward on that. At the same time, we will try to get something on the structural side.

Mr. Murray: When you and your team get a better understanding of what this ~~non-~~withdrawn+ designation means, please let us know so we can advocate to the USACE to help advance.

Ms. Jessica Gonzalez: What does a non-structural plan mean?

Mr. Wrocenski: The non-structural plan now has about 60 properties within Plainfield and Scotch Plains. Non-structural means floodproofing a property by either moving utilities, house elevation or other means such as building ring walls. A Ring wall is building a couple feet high protection around a particular property. Structural plans would include things such as levees, floodwalls or detention basins. All of the structural plans that we considered in the Upper Basin were too expensive and had a negative cost benefit ratio. The plan that can be economically supported is this non-structural plan.

Ms. Gonzalez: And there is nothing that can be done for the upper Basin to get a structural plan? We just heard all this work done in the Lower Basin with ponding areas and pump stations and levees, hard to imagine nothing similar can be done for Upper Basin where we just had loss of life. I live right on the border of Plainfield and Scotch Plains, just minutes away from where the two ladies were swept away. None of that qualifies us to be eligible for some type of funding for more assistance. I know in the July flood, we did not qualify for FEMA assistance, but this area has qualified for that before and if it continues to happen, isn't there some other type of grant or way that we can get funding for both the structural and non-structural plans to better help the Upper Basin communities.

Mr. Murray: When we met with USACE after the August Memorial Service, we discussed the fact that they were pursuing this non-structural approach and we are concerned that we would still have loss of life. How do we bring that loss of life into the economic equation so that we can justify something more than just the non-structural solution. The Corps did acknowledge that it would be a goal. I am now just hearing that even the non-structural right now is paused. They were in the process of re-studying the Upper Basin and were asking for more money to continue that study. And now that was withdrawn, which sounds like it was denied, so now our goal is to understand why and how we get it back on track.

The struggle we have been wrestling with internally is if we sign off completely on a non-structural solution, would eventually someone say, "we gave you something and we are not going to re-examine that area afterwards." We are debating how much to push back now and get congressional staff involved to understand the implications of both paths. We have not given up on the Upper Basin, and we are going to do as much as we can to get everybody in the Basin protection. We want real solutions for everybody.

The unfortunate part of the equation is we are not a funded project, so we are fighting against projects all over the country within the USACE to be funded. We were in good standing because we had a project that was studied and approved and then we went back and said "can we take another look at this because we can't build what was originally designed," and that is where we were. It is going to take some fighting to make this project important enough that it continues for the Upper Basin. We are ready for that fight, and we are connected with the Senators' offices and the other Congressional offices in DC. We are now just trying to get study money. Once we get that, you have to come up with the solutions and then we have to get Congress authorization to build it. We have to be smart about how we are fighting.

Ms. Gonzalez: I just have a couple more questions. Sixty homes in Plainfield and Scotch Plains does not sound like a lot. A non-structural solution does not require making people move, it just puts in safety measures into our homes. Is that correct?

Mr. Murray: For the most part yes. If you have a basement, it may involve taking that out of the basement and putting it into the attic or a small addition above the floodway. If your first floor is below the flood elevation, it may mean raising your house. Things like that. And you are right, doing 60 homes does not seem like a lot, especially since Scotch Plains reported that 240 basements took on water during the storm. Now, they are not all related to the Green Brook and the overtopping coming down the mountain, but it does seem like 60 is a low number.

Ms. Gonzalez: How would you know if your home is in that area? I live on a small street with only 14 houses. At least five of them had a full basement of water, and three had water on the first floor, and that is just those that I know of. Are any of these included?

Mr. Wrocenski: As part of working through the steps of the study, we planned to release this study to the public in the Spring and have public meetings to show plans. With the new determination of "withdrawn," we are still trying to figure out what this means and how do we move forward. I don't have an answer, but by the next Flood Control meeting I hope to have more guidance.

As far as the structures that were picked, any project related with the Federal Government, we have to do something called a benefit-to-cost ratio. They would have looked at the elevations and cost of things and possibly cluster some houses together and also see where the actual overbanking from the Brook comes from.

Discussion continues about how to get a structural solution back on the table.

Mr. Earl Meyers: Ed, thank you for all of your efforts. As I listen to you speak, you sound like the messenger, and we don't want to shoot you. We thank you! We appreciate you! Keep up the good work! If any of your higher ups need any real hands-on, next time we have a flood, please give me their email address and I will ask them to help me clear the sewage out of my basement and they will really get a good feel.

My question is about the cost benefit analysis. Is the out of pocket to the homeowner taken into account when doing that analysis? During Hurricane Ida, I lost my front foundation on my house and everything in the basement. For this last one, I just lost contents in the basement. Is all of that considered when you calculate cost benefit analysis?

Mr. Wrocenski: I want to say yes, but I will confirm with my team what goes into the economic analysis and follow up with you.

Mr. Meyers: I spent \$25,000 just to put in a new foundation, but I'd like to know who sees those numbers. As Jessica mentioned, regarding this last storm, we can't even deduct cost of the repairs on our Federal income tax because it wasn't declared. Just pure out of pocket, plus flood insurance is all out of pocket. Those costs should be taken into account for a cost benefit analysis or your ratios are off.

Mr. Murray: You can get my email off the GBFCC website. Email me and I will get your contact information over to Ed.

COMMENTS FROM THE COUNTIES

Middlesex County – Anthony Panzarino . Not Present

Somerset County – Valarie Bogart . Not Present

Union County – **Ray Sullivan** – Noting to add but I do appreciate being included and I will discuss this meeting with Rick Matias, the County Engineer, tomorrow.

GBFCC ENGINEER . Rich O'Connor . No report.

WINNING STRATEGIES . Rob Zucker

We are tracking the FY26 Energy and Water Appropriations Bill, this is what will fund the USACE operations in the coming fiscal year. The Federal government shutdown put off until January 30th the permanent funding situation. Based on what Ed reported tonight, Ray, you & I need to see what the implication of that withdrawal is and how it impacts that non-structural plan. If necessary to brief the Senators and Congressional delegation so in case there is some way to adjust language so it could affect this situation.

With the announcement of the retirement of Representative Bonnie Watson-Coleman, who has been heavily involved in the project and in securing funding through the Disaster Relief Act, and additional legislative provisions to obviate the need for State & Local County share of that

appropriation, it does mean that we lose a strong advocate for the project. As we have noted, this is a long-term project, members have come and gone. We constantly find the need to educate & reeducate people about the project, not just through their committee work.

Other Questions/Comments . None.

MEETING ADJOURNED: The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Upcoming GBFCC meeting dates:

February 4, 2026, 7:30 pm . via Zoom

April 1, 2026, 7:30 pm . via Zoom

June 3, 2026, 7:30 pm . via Zoom

August 1, 2026, 9:3- am . In-person, American Legion Pavilion, 707 Legion Place, Middlesex

October 7, 2026, 7:30 pm . via Zoom

December 2, 2026, 7:30 pm . via Zoom