

**GREEN BROOK FLOOD CONTROL COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

LOCATION: Virtual Meeting

DATE: October 5, 2022

MEETING CONVENEED: 7:45PM

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
William Crosby . GBFCC Treasurer- NP
Alek Peterson . USACE NY District
Nate Wales - USACE NY District
Luis Santiago . USACE NY District
Kunal Patel . NJDEP
Tom Slowinski . NJDEP
Valerie Bogart . Somerset County
Joe Skupien . Somerset County
Rich O'Connor . Engineer, GBFCC
Rob Zucker . Winning Strategies

Michael Kirsh - Bridgewater
Terri Albertson . Dunellen
Harry Allen . North Plainfield
John Ferguson . South Plainfield
Jerry Searfoss . Green Brook
Residents:
Jeanne Kingsley . Berkeley Heights
Pat Piontkowski . Green Brook
Jen Testa . Green Brook resident
Maribel Carvalho . Middlesex
Golda Harris . North Plainfield resident
Florence

MINUTES

The June and August minutes were approved. A copy of approved minutes is available on the GBFCC website.

TREASURY REPORT . Mr. Crosby

Plainfield is the only municipality yet to pay the annual assessment.

Mr. Crosby added that a proposed 2023 budget has been uploaded to the website, which included a 1.75% increase to the member Municipalities and Counties. The budget will be voted on at the December meeting

Expenses from the normal three bills to be paid . Grotto Engineering, Secretary for sending out notices, and our consultant Winning Strategies. Bills were reviewed & motion to pay. Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

Primarily just internal correspondence and some reminders on dues.

ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS . Alek Peterson, Project Manager

Budgeted in Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (DRSA) for \$496 million which is most of the amount needed to complete construction in Lower Basin and Stony Brook. We probably need an additional \$40 million. That money is cost shared between Federal

government and NJ Dept of Environmental Protection. It is held in a pool by Headquarters. We request money each year and get what we need. FY23 we will probably need about \$70 million in Federal funding from the DRSA. I don't anticipate that will be any issue. The non-federal match for FY23 is about \$28 million. Will need that money about the January time frame. Have a contract that we are looking to award for environmental mitigation early in the calendar year. Will want to keep project moving and also look at the options in C2 & H, as well as C3 & C4.

Segments U-R-T: Borough of Bound Brook . completed.

Segments B1, B2, B3: Borough of Middlesex - completed.

Segment C-H-B-D: Borough of Middlesex . . two active contracts

Segment C2, Contract 1 . looking to close out soon, possibly this month.

Segment C1 . Base floodwall up to the hydraulic gap, the pump chamber, floodwall, culvert through the railroad track, interior drainage basin and finishing work is all complete.

Some additional items such as closing base gap, 125-foot floodwall, levee and generator building pump station and waiting for acquisition of 207 Pond Ave. Just learned that we need to update the condemnation package to include the move of the Verizon easement. We were looking to get the condemnation package back to Division level in September, but now its October and we have a few things to do still. I'd try to get a timeline for resubmission. Can't finish C1 until we get that package.

Segment C2& H . Looking to award the base contract towards end of November, consisting of two closure gates across South Lincoln Ave and the floodwall monoliths to support the gates.

- Real estate acquisition has been certified.
- The environmental permits that are needed from the NJDEP Land Use Regulatory Program and the Flood Hazard Act permit are anticipated at end of October, possibly same for the Freshwater Wetlands Permit.
- Need to complete design. Got conditional approval within the district to advertise the package while we bring design from 90% to 100%.

Good amount of option work associated with C2 & H, largely consisting of levees and two pump stations.

Remaining C1 features are hydraulically dependent on some features of C2 & H and meant to be built in tandem. 207 Pond Ave acquisition and condemnation package will not hold up the award of the C2 & H base contract though. C1 Contract was extended to February 2023 to give us additional time to acquire real estate and finish the remaining features. Looking to award remaining C2 & H features FY2023 after we get 207 Pond Ave.

Segment C3 & C4 - Anticipate award in FY2023, consisting of floodwall and levee, in area of Pine Brook Apartments. Working with apartment owner to acquire the needed real estate.

Segment B4 & C5 - (hydraulically dependent) Anticipate awarding a construction contract in FY2024. With the increased DRSA funding there is an expectation to ramp up design and award larger construction contracts.

Segment I-J-K - Negotiating with a surveying company and the Philadelphia District to do borings in the area. We are moving efforts into this area as we continue to build C-H-B-D in Middlesex. The survey company would gather topographic data . elevations and contours - of the land and water so we could determine where to place levees and floodwalls and where to tie it to high ground. Also need Geotech borings on properties to ensure soil is stable, and later we will do wetland borings.

I will check with Emergency Operations to see the status of awarding contract for the repairs to the Bound Brook U-R-T features which were damaged by Ida. Anticipate it will be this month, but I need to confirm.

ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS . Nate Wales, Upper Basin

Good news to share. USACE spoke with the Commission back in June. Executed the feasibility cost sharing agreement with NJDEP to kick off the reevaluation of flood risk management alternatives for the Upper Basin after determining that the Oakway & Skytop detention basins are not economically justified. Looking at new alternatives to address flooding in Upper Basin including Plainfield and North Plainfield and other spots that experience flooding.

Luis Santiago, part of this Zoom call now, will be our Lead Planner on this effort, doing the planning analysis, screening alternatives, determining the tentatively selected plan and putting that into a report that we will invite public comment on in early 2024.

We have all the funding we need to complete the study in three years. Being funded with 100% Federal funds as long as we keep the study under \$3 million.

We are looking at multiple alternatives. First, looking at non-structural measures such as raising structures higher than the current foundations, building ring walls, possibly a limited number of buy outs.

The next would be something similar to what was proposed in 1997, channel modifications or small segments of levees or flood walls along the Green Brook to address some of the flooding.

The third option is to look at a combination of both of those.

The fourth alternative is diversion channels & tunnels. It comes from a 2001 screening report from an Upper Basin task force. There are five alignments that the report looked at, routing water away from the Upper Basin. Those were screened out 20 years ago because the boring tunnels were so expensive. Going to take another look because with advances in construction & boring technology over the last 20 years, possibly the costs have come down enough to make diversion tunnels a competitive option.

Our hydraulic engineers are also taking a look at an existing large flood tunnel in the City of Plainfield that runs from the Green Brook to the Cedar Brook. Will see if there is something to be done with that for better flood risk management. If we do move forward with an alternative like this, we will let Commission know & will certainly let DEP know, as the study cost may increase.

The fifth alternative would be other detention basins in other locations in the Upper Basin. Some of these can be screened out quickly due to environmental concerns, endangered species, etc. There are a couple of locations where it might be possible to build a detention basin to provide

flood risk management. We are certain that if we did that, based on our experience of trying to validate the economic justifications of the Oakway & Skytop detention basins, those would not be economically justified. Only way to move that idea forward is to look at other factors to help balance against the economic justification, such as life safety & environmental justice. It will require extra time & policy waivers that go all the way up to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. If we do investigate detention basins, we are certain it will extend the scope beyond three years and cost more than \$3 million, so we will need to ask DEP to amend the cost sharing contribution.

First thing to do within the next couple months is screen those five alternatives down. Right now, collecting information about existing conditions, putting together H & H models, and looking at possible construction costs. Trying to focus in on which alternatives we will dive deeper into with a target for report out in January 2024.

Mr. Peterson: Also wanted to include that members of the team visited Plainfield twice to look at the area and see how the water flows through the area. Met with a police officer from Plainfield. Saw the 3.5-mile long, 15-foot diameter diversion flood tunnel flows through Plainfield from Terrill Road by Milton Campbell Field down to Cedar Brook Park by the High School. Diversion tunnels are quite expensive, but since this is built already there may be a chance to utilize this. Lots to investigate. Plainfield has a fair amount of flooding and very helpful to the team members to see the site and interact with Plainfield staff.

Mr. Wales: I know I see Harry Allen on the attendance list. If you have information regarding flooding of the Green Brook from North Plainfield or other places, that would be helpful.

Mr. Harry Allen: Yes, sure. I was on the first Upper Basin task force too.

Questions from the Commission for USACE

Joe Skupien, Somerset County: Question for Alek & Nate. You mentioned five alternatives you would be looking into for the Upper Basin. If I heard correctly, channel improvements and other detention basins sites, are not one of the five. Is that correct?

Mr. Wales: That is correct. Those two in combination would not be one of the five, unless there was a desire to expand the study costs and expand the study schedule, and most importantly making a case to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works on why we should look at those. Because our research so far, shows that no detention basin, in combination with channel improvements, would be economically justified.

Mr. Skupien: So, that analysis has already been done?

Mr. Wales: Yes. That analysis has been done and can be extrapolated easily in the next three months from the validation study that we did on Oakway & Skytop. Even without redesigning those two detention basins to current USACE design standards, those detention basins had BCR of 0.2 or 0.3. Our thinking is that if we even start looking at detention basins in the Upper Basin, we are going to run into a similar problem. In the next three months, we will list them out and explain why. That will all be part of our internal discussions, but a first look leads us to think they will not be economically justified.

Mr. Skupien: Sounds like I need to go back and look at the validation study.

Mr. Murray: Is that 0.2 or 0.3 benefit at all affected by the fact that now we have essentially pulled the Upper Basin out of the overall project, and we are not looking at it as part of the overall approved plan.

Mr. Wales: We ran those numbers, looking at it as an entire system. We built the parts that had the greatest BCR first, and now that is balanced out by these things that on their own would not be economically justified. When we tried to calculate all together, the answer is still no. I think it was a BCR of 0.8 or 0.9. And that was not even looking at the increase in costs from designing up to current post-Katrina standards.

Mr. Murray: One of the criticism that we have always had was that we didn't think we were catching all the benefits. In a kinder, gentler nation that we live in now, where we consider loss of life, economic justice and equality . if we look through that lens, we might get a higher benefit out of it, but I don't know that we are quite there yet.

Mr. Wales: With regard to life safety, it is certainly significant in the Green Brook Basin, Lower Basin or Stony Brook, but as far as we can tell, it has not occurred in the Upper Basin.

Mr. Murray: But if all those are added into the BCR ratio, then your 0.8 or 0.9, may get over 1.0. I don't know that we are going to convince USACE to recalculate in those terms at this point.

Mr. Wales: To be honest, we don't yet know how to do that. It will be a qualitative analysis and ultimately, we will have to convince Congress.

Questions from Residents to the USACE

Ms. Golda Harris . Ms. Harris asks for clarifications on a few topics - federal funding sources, current drought warnings and the effect of that on our detention basins, and the status of 207 Pond Ave property acquisition.

Mr. Allen: Mr. Allen expresses his concern over the basins, long term drought problems, declined water table in the area, and the multiple brooks in the area that are prone to flash-flooding. He suggests thinking outside the box in terms of non-structural solutions, especially thinking of ways to capture the water. Possibly some type of retention that encourages ground water recharge be investigated, involving building more flood plain woodlands, and also using tiered barriers to slow the velocity of the flow. He feels that velocity is a major problem.

NJ DEP

Kunal Patel - no comment.

Tom Slowinski . The County & the State are concerned. NJDOT hired IEW (Industrial Engineering Works) to perform repairs from Ida at the Route 22 bridge over Middle Brook on the eastbound side. Work is substantially completed. Spoke to the project engineer there and he said they would exit the site and come back, but leaving it up to Bridgewater Township and DeFeo, the car dealer, to see what they wanted in terms of some type of slope protection there.

Michael Kirsh, representing Bridgewater, I will get your email from Ray and send you details from USACE with the pertinent information from the Segment U repair work. Bill Wise from the County is concerned that they moved rocks around to cut the levee with the robotic mowers. They don't want to damage that.

All in all, everything looks good. There was a break in a sanitary sewer line and that took a lot of the work there. Coordinating with Bridgewater Township and DeFeo, as he owns some of that land, to decide what should be done there. It is outside the scope of the work, but it feeds into the USACE project. There is a drainage ditch there which just got cleaned out & that's a good thing.

Ida repairs with the PIR project . we met the contractor, and they will probably get going very soon. Need to finish up paperwork. Levee repairs, stonework, tree cleanup, R-2 pump station repairs, etc.

As we speak, Somerset County has their team working tonight. They will be exercising the road closure and the NJ Transit closure gates starting at 10:00 on East Avenue and then at 12:00 on South Main St. at the Queensgate bridge. By 1:00, should get the word from Transit to close the gates. Kudos to Somerset County . you always do a good job.

Mountainview Diner in Dunellen. The resident contractor is still parking his equipment in there. The Corps has paperwork out to Carbro to get some barriers in there to restrict access. Ongoing thing and he is taking advantage. Paul, maybe you can take some pictures to make sure he isn't dumping any material.

Mr. Murray: Paul, I would suggest you send the police department out, and have them get the registration information from the plate. They can let him know it is not Borough-owned. The property is owned by the Corps at this point. He needs to get it off the property. If he doesn't, put the barriers up and let him figure out how to get the vehicles around the barriers.

Mr. Peterson: I'll check in with Contracting to see status.

Mr. Slowinski: In Dunellen, through our Blue Acres Program, it looks like it will make the purchase with two families. In negotiations with a handful of others. Exploring others. Mayor Cilento is on board. These are repetitive loss properties, some are substantial loss, and are not on the Corps buyout list. Anything that the Blue Acres Program can do, we welcome that as long as the town is okay with it. It is a good thing.

Finally, last month I announced the North Plainfield & South Plainfield had passed their floodplain ordinances. Happy to announce that Piscataway & Dunellen have now also have passed their floodplain ordinances. Its up to residents to make sure these are enforced. The towns that are not on board yet, please do what you can to get on board. If everyone keeps an eye out to be sure that catch basins and storm basins are clear, and if not let your DPW know. Everything helps in a flood event.

COMMENTS FROM THE COUNTIES

Somerset County – Valerie Bogart not much to add. Tom already mentioned that Somerset County are exercising the flood gates tonight at 10:00.

Middlesex County – No representative present

Union County – No representative present

GBFCC ENGINEER . Rich O'Connor

Nothing to report.

WINNING STRATEGIES . Rob Zucker

Over the last few months, we have been working with Ray to invite members that represent the area to come do site visits. We anticipate doing that in conjunction with the Corps in the later portion of this year. To walk around the project and see the areas that have been successfully completed and see what still needs to be done is very important.

Despite the very large and welcome funding under DRSA, we do understand that there are plenty of areas that the Federal Representatives need to engage with the Corps, on behalf of the Commission to advance parts of project. As mentioned before, we may look at possibly expanding the scope of the project. We are keeping up these relationships.

During this last period, we saw the retirement of Keith Roachford, from Senator Mendez office. He has been one of the most tenured staff within the NJ delegation. He has worked for four senators and has been invested in the project over that time. Retirement is well deserved.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS / COMMENTS

Ms. Jen Testa: Inquired about cleanup still lingering from Ida with large trees down in the Green Brook which appear to be blocking flow. Also concerned about digging on the Dunellen side and movement of dirt.

Mr. Murray: Reassured that he will give a call over to Dunellen & get someone out to take a look and. As for blockages, we will attempt to address as well.

Ms. Harris: Asked about floodplain ordinance for North Plainfield. Tom Slowinski will follow-up.

Discussion with Ms. Maribel Carvalho, resident at Cap Lane in Middlesex, about a project update & what segment her home is in. Her house was flooded, and her flood insurance increased.

Mr. Murray & Mr. Slowinski explained that Mr. Peterson's update earlier was the current project update and reassured Ms. Carvalho that her home is the next part of the project that will get work done.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:00 pm

Upcoming GBFCC meeting dates:

Wednesday, December 7, 2022, 7:30 pm