

**GREEN BROOK FLOOD CONTROL COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

LOCATION: Virtual Meeting

DATE: April 19, 2023

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
William Crosby . GBFCC Treasurer- NP
Nate Wales . USACE NY District
Alek Peterson . USACE NY District
Edward Wroncenski . USACE NY District
Tom Slowinski . NJDEP
Anthony Panzarino . Middlesex County
Joe Skupien . Somerset County
Bernice Dieter . Union County
Rich O'Connor . Engineer, GBFCC
Rob Zucker . Winning Strategies
Jerry Searfoss . Green Brook

Oren Dabney . Plainfield
Bill Picard . Scotch Plains
John Ferguson . South Plainfield
Alice Temple . South Plainfield
Christine Ead . Watchung

Sarah Maher - Dunellen
Jen Testa . Green Brook
Roger Reffler . Green Brook
Golda Harris . North Plainfield
Nancy Piwowar . Plainfield
Danielle M . Scotch Plains

MINUTES

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

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Murray reported that the Commission received an email from a Bridgewater resident inquiring about non-structural floodproofing, and that email was forwarded to USACE for follow-up. He also reported that a letter was received on March 17, where USACE indicated that project qualified as fully-funded under the Disaster relief bill approved by Congress last year. As such, The Federal government will provide 100% of the funding for the lower basin and Stony brook portions of the project, and the State and Counties will NOT be required to come up with a 25% cost share, saving \$124 million.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Crosby noted that nearly half all participants have paid their 2023 dues. Expenses for the period include the normal three bills to be paid . Grotto Engineering, Tina Totten for sending out notices, and our Government Relations consultant Winning Strategies. Motion to pay the bills carried.

ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS . Nate Wales, Project Planner/Alek Peterson, Project Manager

Edward Wroncenski will be helping Alek with construction actions over the next few months.

Lower Basin:

Segment C1 . Work has stopped. We have gotten as far as we can without the acquisition of 207 Pond, which is working through the Federal condemnation process. Should be to Division next week, then it goes up the chain.

Segment C2 & H - Awarded the base contract about 3 weeks ago. Contractor to begin work within the next few weeks. (a few hundred feet of flood wall and closure gates). Won't be able to execute the options until C1 is completed.

Segment C3 & C4 . Finishing design and real estate acquisition. Plan to award in about 12 months. (flood wall & levee)

Working with NJ DEP and our internal USACE to amend the project cost sharing agreement to 100% fully funded using DRSA funds. A few issues internally.

Segment C5 & B4 . Continue with design. B4 is 90% design. C5 is at 35% design.

Segment C6, C7 & D and Segment I-J-K . Working on proper sequencing plans. Surveys and geo-technical borings are on-going in this area.

Upper Basin:

USACE held an internal milestone meeting on Feb 2nd which included participation from the DEP as well as members of Commission. Presented our final array of alternatives that we came up with since we started the general reevaluation of the Upper Basin. We had already ruled large levee and flood wall construction in Plainfield and North Plainfield. We also ruled out new diversion tunnels. We retained non-structural measures. We have also retained the alternative of a detention basin along New Providence Road for now. Looking into detail on that to see if it could be considered. Thirdly, we retained a combination measure which will look comprehensively to maximize multiple benefits.

The goal is to get a draft report out by mid-late February of next year and then go out to public comment. We will probably need an environmental impact statement, so we are starting to reach out to affected communities.

Anticipate having a complete General Reevaluation Report in September 2025. That will result in a report by the Chief of Engineers which will then go to Congress, and then Congress will authorize what is to be constructed in the Upper Basin.

If a detention basin alternative is to be constructed, that schedule would be pushed further out by about a year.

Questions for USACE:

Ms. Sara Maher, resident of Dunellen - We were working to design a native botanical library, a garden for educational purposes, or possibly a meadow of native plants at McKoy Park, then we

found out that floodwalls or levees are being discussed for that park. Want to find out more details on the timeline so we can rescue the native plants before the area is torn up. Then when construction is done, we can relandscape with a garden full of native plants and see if the area is viable for a botanical library.

Mr. Murray: Alek Peterson would be the contact person for that. He indicated earlier that more data is needed before we can create a schedule for construction. I'm sure we can work with Mayor Cilento to get you ample notice before construction begins. The caveat would be that there are rules to be followed according to the design plan features as to where the planting is allowed as some clear paths need to be left for maintenance purposes.

Mr. Peterson: We are about three to four years out before issuing a construction contract for that area. There is a 15-foot no vegetative area from the floodwall or levee. Grass can be there, but not trees or plants. We can definitely work with you as it gets closer, but just don't have a timeframe yet.

Ms. Maher: We had discussed plans for near Mauer House (west of Madison Avenue) is that an area that there are levees or floodwalls planned for too?

Mr. Peterson: I'll consult our preliminary designs and look for those areas and let you know.

Mr. Murray: Send me an email - my contact information is on the Commission website. I can keep you in contact with Alek.

Ms. Maher: One additional question. I am a Rutgers Environmental Steward and am heavily involved in trying to get native plants in communities everywhere possible. Once you do all this work, are you populating the ground with water loving plants, shrubs and trees? Would really want the area that can have vegetation to have the proper vegetation. The native plants would be the hardiest.

Mr. Peterson: Yes. Anywhere that is possible within the engineering design, we replant native hardy species that are good for the area. We have a project biologist. I will speak with her and contact you.

Mr. Paul Wolska: A lot of trees were cut down in Middlesex, but the trees were left there. Residents are concerned that they will be a flood hazard or could become buoyant.

Mr. Murray explained there was a specific deadline constraints that had to be met for cutting large trees and that was a priority. They will be back to clean those trees up within a month or so. Mr. Peterson will be sure to make sure that the appropriate people are taking care of this.

NJ DEP . Tom Slowinski

The pre-construction meeting for C2 & H is a good sign as things are looking to gear up at the beginning of May. Will be good to see production again after a dormant period. All upcoming permits are in order, except for the one NJ Transit permit for Segment H levee. At some point within the next year, Lincoln Avenue will have to close to put in the closure gates. Can't stage that to do only one portion at a time. There is a detour route already mapped out. It will be an inconvenience, but hopefully everyone can adapt.

Middlesex is also doing some road improvements with pavers in between the curb and sidewalks on Route 28. It looks good so we will need to take a lot of pictures of that area. If there is any damage during our work, we will be responsible.

My office is the State Administrator for the National Flood Insurance Program. With FEMA, we have been sending out to all municipalities in New Jersey a model Flood Plain Ordinance that is much more stringent than what exists. We are leaving it up to the towns to accept it or to make it stricter. Several towns, especially coastal towns, are making it stricter.

Kudos to Dunellen, North Plainfield, South Plainfield, and Piscataway for adopting new ordinances which were accepted by the State and are now active. Bridgewater, Green Brook, Warren, Watchung, Plainfield and South Bound Brook have submitted drafts to the State. Scotch Plains is under review. Bound Brook needs some revisions. Have not heard anything from Middlesex Borough. Paul, perhaps you can push that with the town. It is very important to have Floodplain Ordinances. These projects work, but the ordinances accompany them, and the ordinances need to be enforced.

Danielle M, resident from Scotch Plains: After these projects are 100% complete, say 20 years from now, will a reevaluation be done that will affect the flood baseline?

Mr. Slowinski: Yes. It has already been done in Bound Brook, and the maps have been amended to include the features of the flood protection projects. The only caveat is that with the sea level rise and the frequency and intensity of these storms, the maps may change again so the 500-year line becomes 100-year line. I always suggest folks don't drop their flood insurance.

Roger Reffler, resident of Green Brook: I haven't heard Segment D mentioned and my property lies between Segment D & Segment I. I am curious about the timeframe for that area.

Mr. Murray: Segment D will be constructed simultaneously with C6 & C7. Cannot build it now because it will cause flooding. Working on the sequencing for Segment D with our hydraulic modeling and then can present a time frame. With our increased DRSA funding, we will be able to do larger scale projects at one time. i.e. \$70 to 90 million segments vs \$10 to \$20 million. It will significantly speed things along.

COMMENTS FROM THE COUNTIES

Middlesex County – Anthony Panzarino . Continuing maintenance. Doing some upgrades to our B1 pump station.

Somerset County – Joseph Skupien . Continuing maintenance. Asked Alec to follow up on the post-Ida repair contract status.

Union County – Bernice Dieter . Working with FEMA for Ida related damages. No other comments.

GBFCC ENGINEER . Rich O'Connor
Nothing to report.

WINNING STRATEGIES . Rob Zucker

Great news reported earlier about the DRSA provision that is leading to full Federal funding of the project. Important to note that it was pursuant to the efforts of Congresswoman Bonnie Watson-Coleman, Senator Cory Booker and Senator Menedez. Very grateful to them and their staff, and to the efforts and advocacy of the Army Corps, DEP and the Commission. True example of Federal taxpayer dollars at work and saving substantial money of New Jersey community taxpayers.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS / COMMENTS

None.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:30 pm

Upcoming GBFCC meeting dates:

Wednesday, June 7, 2023, 7:30 pm . via Zoom

Saturday, August 5, 2023, 9:30 am . in person, Middlesex American Legion, 707 Legion Place

Wednesday, October 4, 2023, 7:30 pm . via Zoom

Wednesday, December 6, 2023, 7:30 pm . via Zoom