

**GREEN BROOK FLOOD CONTROL COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

LOCATION: Virtual Meeting

DATE: June 7, 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
Alek Peterson . USACE NY District
Nate Wales . USACE NY District
Tom Slowinski . NJDEP
Joe Skupien . Somerset County
Ricardo Matias . Union County
Rich O'Connor . Engineer, GBFCC
Rob Zucker . Winning Strategies
Cole Sigmon . Dunellen

Jerry Searfoss . Green Brook
Oren Dabney . Plainfield
Bill Picard . Scotch Plains
John Ferguson . South Plainfield
Alice Temple . South Plainfield

Golda Harris . North Plainfield
Debra Vargas . Middlesex
Kathy Tim . Middlesex
Linda

MINUTES

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

CORRESPONDENCE

Nothing to report.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Crosby is not at the meeting tonight so Mr. Murray is giving the Treasurer's report.

All dues from members have been submitted, with the exception of Union County who promised payment as soon as they close out last year. Waiting for the new budget year to start on July 1.

The usually three bills are up to be paid . Grotto Engineering, Tina Totten & Winning Strategies. Motion to pay the bills carried.

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

Nate Wales: Upper Basin

Currently engaged in a general reevaluation for the Upper Basin. Three alternatives being analyzed for Flood Risk Management.

- 1) Comprehensive Non-Structural plan . elevate homes, add ring walls, etc.
- 2) Combination Plan . non-structural measures plus floodwalls, levees, channel modifications, possibly small check basins.

- 3) At the request of the Commission, we are looking into a Detention Basin in an alternative location. Looking at New Providence Gorge & have selected the site so it would not impact the Weldon Quarry. We will impact New Providence Road. Definitely some challenges to work through. Have scheduled meeting with Somerset County. Will be scheduling a meeting with Union County, to discuss the challenges especially rerouting traffic.

Will have at least one public scoping meeting in the coming months.

We are on track to hold our tentative plan milestone meeting in December, when the USACE will make the recommendation of what plan we believe to be the best path forward, and from there we will draft a feasibility report & reevaluation report for February. Also, will need an environmental assessment.

Mr. Ricardo Matias, Union County: Have you reached out directly to property owners & business owners in the area, specifically Weldon Quarry?

Mr. Murray: I reached out to the Business Administrator in Watchung, Jim Damato, to get his feelings and possibly an introduction to people that run Weldon Quarry. We can do that when we have more details. Wanted to get some input from the Counties first and also some more insight as to our options before going to property owners.

Mr. Wales: If you can share that contact information for Watchung, it would be helpful as that was one municipality, we did not get a response from.

Alek Peterson: Lower Basin

Construction General Funding, which is 75% of the 75/25 split, is starting to run low. Will run out later this year. At that point we will start spending Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (DRSA) funds. We have \$496 million of that, and it is all Federally funded, not cost-shared with non-federal sponsor. Working with Headquarters to draft a Project Partnership Agreement (PPA) which will amend the cost share. Headquarters is also asking for a cost update of the project as well as a Section 902 calculation to see if the project exceeds the authorized limits. Anticipate getting those to headquarters this summer.

Working with NJDEP right now to put together a Memorandum Agreement to continue to acquire real estate on behalf of NJDEP.

Construction Status in Middlesex:

Lower Basin:

Segment C1 . We have gotten as far as we can without the acquisition property. Condemnation package transferred to Division last week. It needs to go up the chain of command. Once we have access to that property, we can finish the remaining C1 features.

Segment C2 & H - Awarded the base contract in March consisting of a few hundred feet of flood wall and two closure gates across South Lincoln Avenue. Contractor looking to mobilize this month. We have cleared trees in that area. Won't be able to execute the options until C1 is completed due to hydraulic connectivity.

Segment C3 & C4 . Architect Engineering Firm is revising planting diagrams for the apartment complex in this area. Expect to award construction contract in FY2024.

Segment C5 & B4 .

Segment C5 . Looking to award a modification to our design contract to include interior drainage facilities, consisting of a pump station, small ponding area and an athletic field too. It is in the park area, near the high school. That modification is a few months away from being awarded. Once awarded, the pump station and other features can be designed.

Segment B4 - Hydraulically connected to C5. Coordinating with Verizon and internally, to see where we can relocate the fiber optic cable. Our real estate office has started to do preliminary work to acquire property.

Probably in FY2025 will be ready to award construction contracts for C5 & B4 simultaneously.

Segment C6, C7 & D – Completed surveys. Before we can implement C6, C7 & D we need to construct a good deal of Segment I-J-K.

Segment I-J-K - Doing surveys now to prepare for the design. Bathymetry is done. Still need to do geo-technical borings and topographical surveys. Coordinating to get those awarded. After the surveys are completed, we will issue a design contract and then a construction contract. Time frame is about three to four years out.

Also coordinating to acquire easements to do repairs in the borough of Bound Brook due to damages from Hurricane Ida.

Mr. Paul Woska, Middlesex Township: Is there any time frame for cleaning up those trees? They are still there and present a hazard to the residents.

Mr. Peterson: I coordinated that with our Construction Division & they let the contractor know it needed to be cleaned up, but I will follow up again on that.

Mr. Woska: Also, do you have a contract with the Borough to cut the grass for the house that is next to your office?

Mr. Peterson: I will follow up on that too.

Ms. Debra Vargas, Resident of Middlesex: Also expressed concern over trees still there and asked if anyone talked to residents on 3rd, 2nd & 1st Streets about lifting their homes? People in my area have experienced great loss and some were displaced from homes for many months. Every storm brings tremendous angst.

Mr. Peterson: I am not sure that we have non-structural measures planned for the area of Cap Lane & 3rd Street. I will check to see if there are any homes in the authorized plan listed to be elevated or floodproofed in that area.

Mr. Peterson explained the outline of intended plans & the complicated process for the work planned in Ms. Vargas neighborhood in Cap Lane & 3rd Street area.

Ms. Vargas expressed her frustration and desire to speed the process up so her neighborhood gets flood protection faster.

Mr. Murray: I sympathize & empathize. Although my home is not near the Green Brook, my office is and as part of my job as a town representative, I have lived through flooding. The Municipal Building has been affected. We also work with residents when they are affected by a storm. We understand how you are feeling. I too have expressed my desire to Alek Peterson about moving the condemnation package along. There are many levels/departments involved within the USACE. The Commission is more than happy to make the pitch to the Colonel if we need to, to see what he can do for a more speedy review of the condemnation package, so we get it moved along to the DOJ. Likewise, if we need to engage the Congressional delegation, we are willing to do that too. We want this done as quickly as possible too, just like you want to see it done. We have overcome a great hurdle with the additional funding, and we don't want one property to hold this up. Please know we want to see shovels in the ground and walls being built sooner rather than later.

Ms. Vargas thanks the Commission for its advocacy.

Ms. Kathy Tim, Resident 3rd Street, Middlesex : Asked if the Commission works hand in hand with the Blue Acres program because she is currently in the process of applying for Blue Acres and being assigned a case worker.

NJ DEP . Tom Slowinski

It is good that you have been in contact with Blue Acres program and keep in contact with them. There are two points for Blue Acres consideration . 1) you must be substantially damaged . meaning 50% of a house was damaged and 2) it has to be repetitive loss. It is a good program. If you don't hear back, get in touch with Ray Murray and he can get in touch with me so we can see if there is any way we can help move the process along.

DEP is looking forward to having Segment C2 & H move along. Positive note that Carbro submitted a check for \$6 million to cover mitigation for wetlands. That is a requirement before work starts so that is a good sign.

A lot of work ahead and construction should be starting soon. Permits took some time but things seem headed in the right direction.

The Somerset County Public Works crew will be exercising the gates this week.

I was in contact with the field office and reminded them of the trees laying on the ground. As soon as Carbro mobilizes, the trees will be their first issue.

COMMENTS FROM THE COUNTIES

Somerset County – Joseph Skupien . Good meeting today with the USACE about the Upper Basin. Thanks to the crew for meeting with us and all the good information & good answers.

Union County – Rick Matias . I apologize for the delay in working with Nate to set up a meeting, but it is a positive delay in that there has been a lot of interest from the Union County administrative side about the different possibilities and different options that this dam presents. It is not from a lack of interest, actually the delay is from an abundance of interest. Looking forward to schedule that meeting in the next couple weeks.

GBFCC ENGINEER . Rich O'Connor
Nothing to report.

WINNING STRATEGIES . Rob Zucker

The main point to note is the debt limit deal saga played out. Agreement of debt level spending has been agreed upon and the appropriations process can move forward. It underscores why the DRSA funding was so critical to this project. I anticipate this appropriation process will be rough. Disagreement about whether the budget levels that were just passed are caps or floors or ceilings. All good reasons to continue to be grateful for that DRSA funding.

I'd be glad to follow up with you after this call about outreach on behalf of the constituents as was mentioned earlier tonight. I'm here and ready if you need me.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS / COMMENTS
None.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:25 pm

Upcoming GBFCC meeting dates:

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