

**GREEN BROOK FLOOD CONTROL COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES**

LOCATION: Middlesex

DATE: August 5, 2023

MEETING CONVENED: 9:30AM

NOTE: Adequate notice of this meeting was provided informing the public of the time and place according to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Law (Chapter 231, P.L. 1975).

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chair Raymond S. Murray . Green Brook  
Vice-Chair Paul Woska . Middlesex  
Joe Skupien . Somerset County  
Jerry Searfoss . Green Brook  
Mayor John Madden . Middlesex  
Mark Krantz . Middlesex

Mayor Brian C. Wahler . Piscataway  
Felica McNeil . Plainfield  
Alice Tempel . South Plainfield  
Residents:

See Attached Sign-in Sheets

MINUTES

The minutes of the June meeting were approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Chairman Murray reported for Treasurer Bill Crosby, who was not feeling well this morning. All members have paid their assessment for the year.

Three bills were presented to us to be paid:

- 1) Grotto Engineering, our consulting engineer
- 3) Tina Totten for our meeting notices
- 4) Winning Strategies, our consulting federal government relations firm

The bills have been reviewed and found to be in order.

Chairman Murray reported on ongoing project work and the anticipated schedule, based on information given by Alek Petersen, Project Manager for USACE. Chairman Murray noted that the Commission was overwhelmed by the news that the project was awarded \$496 million for construction of the Lower Basin and Stony Brook portions of the project, as well as an additional \$3.2 million to re-study the Upper Basin. These disaster relief funds were realized through the advocacy of Congresswoman Bonnie Watson-Coleman with the support of Senators Menendez and Booker, as well as the entire New Jersey Congressional Delegation.

The Chairman noted that the August meeting has always been special, as we remember the lives lost 50 years ago, and that we are extremely proud of how far this project has come. While we share in the frustration of the passing of time, we are grateful for the efforts of so many that have worked tirelessly over these many years. Meaningful flood reduction has been realized in Bound Brook, where hundreds of homes and dozens of businesses are protected from significant flood risks. The Downtown is being revitalized and enhanced due to the protections of this project. If not for this protection, this rebirth would never have started.

The Chairman noted that construction is ongoing in Middlesex Borough and is in the survey and design stage upstream. The project has never been more certain, and that it will continue to

improve lives and protect life and property. This certainty is due to the \$496 million commitment by the Federal government, rather than the Commission's annual lobbying for funds, which could and has varied from year to year in the past.

Chairman Murray quoted Treasurer Bill Crosby, who recounted that when the Commission was founded, critics said "don't bother, you will never make any progress." Other flood prone communities insisted they had a better way to move forward, a faster path, yet they have made no progress, they have no protection. The Commission is extremely proud of the progress we have made.

Each year, the August meeting has served as a Memorial to the six lives lost in 1973, in Plainfield and North Plainfield. After TS Floyd, we added the two lives lost in Bound Brook to the list of those remembered. Equally important, the August Memorial has served as a reminder of the damage to life and property, and a call to invigorate the affected communities, to continue to push for protection for the entire 64 square mile basin.

The Chairman stated that now that such a significant financial commitment has been made by Congress, the Commission and the communities need to continue to work together for this common goal. With that money in hand, the next biggest hurdle is acquiring any needed easements, whether temporary or permanent, so that surveying can be completed and construction can begin. It could be through encouraging your neighbor to grant an easement for temporary or permanent access, for the construction or maintenance of the project features. The project is held back by real estate efforts, which can take significant time, and may and does often cause the project segments to be split up, so that work can continue while USACE works on getting the real estate needed to move the segments forward. Uncooperative property owners lead to delays, as condemnation in Federal court is a long, drawn-out process.

Chairman Murray gave thanks for all present here today. He stated that he would be remiss if I did not address some misconceptions that some have, in part from what you may hear from a neighbor or when presented with incomplete or somewhat inaccurate messaging. In short, it is so much better to do what those present have done today. to seek answers to questions, rather than what you have heard at a coffee shop or saw on Facebook.

The Chairman noted that this Commission was founded 49 years ago, and will exist until everything possible has been done to get flood protections for the entire basin. He noted that today is not your last chance to get answers, as the Commission holds meetings every two months, and we are accessible by email or phone between meetings.

Reporting on work timing Chairman Murray noted, work has not stopped - quite the opposite.

- Segment C2 & H was awarded in March 2023 with construction estimated to begin this month.
  - Base consists of two closure gates across S. Lincoln Avenue, one on either side of the brook.
    - The northern gate will be in the gap where the completed Segment C2 floodwall is
    - The south side gate, along with 300 or so feet of floodwall to be placed.

The value of the base is approximately \$23.6M.

- The options consist of levees on both sides of the brook. The northern levee is to the west of S. Lincoln Avenue taking off where the Segment C2, Contract 1 floodwall ends.
- The two southern sections of levee will be on both sides of S. Lincoln Avenue.

- Two pump stations are included in the option.

The total value of the options is \$30M. The options cannot be awarded until we are ready to finish Segment C1.

- Segment C3 & C4 are scheduled for construction award July 2024.
- Segment B4 & C5 July 2025.
- IJK & C6, C7, & D are March 2027 & 2028, respectively.
- EFG & L Sept 2030. (South Plainfield)

The Chairman noted it is important to realize the Federal and State processes for a project of this magnitude take time to complete. Design of each segment, environmental permitting, acquiring real estate, bidding and award, actual construction, inspection review and project close out, certifications needed for the reduction or elimination of flood insurance, and more. All of these steps and more are needed to ensure that the project gets built correctly, in the least invasive way with respect to the environment, and in the proper order, in order to minimize any unintended consequences during construction, such as inducing flooding elsewhere by not building the project in the proper order.

The Chairman noted that while these efforts are ongoing, USACE and the State and Union and Somerset County are re-examining the Upper Basin, where the originally envisioned plan cannot be built for a host of reason, including costs, environmental concerns, and the need for permanent road closure that would result. This re-evaluation of the Upper Basin is occurring with a different USACE team while the construction and continuing design are happening in the lower basin and Stony Brook areas.

### MEMORIAL SERVICE

Chairman Murray opening the Memorial Service, welcomed and thanked all for being present. He remembered the lives lost in 1973 and 1999, and the need to continue to advocate for the completion of meaningful flood control measures for the entire basin.

Chairman Murray remembered the lives lost, which included; William Clark (age 57, Plainfield), Stephen Langhorne (age 15, North Plainfield), Richard Sciarretta (age 32, Bernardsville), Jerry Spinner (age 45, Warren), Keith Stewart (age 21, Warren) and Harry Timmons (age 30, Plainfield). The ceremony also remembered Mary Tharp (age 85) and her son John Tharp (age 58), who lost their lives September 17, 1999, during the Downtown flooding in Bound Brook, which was caused by Hurricane Floyd.

Chairman Murray concluded the Memorial portion of the meeting, thanking all of the residents, Commissioners, and Federal, State and Local officials who have worked tirelessly for the Green Brook Flood Control Project. He especially thanked founding Chairman Vernon Noble and his wife Shirley (Green Brook), former Chairmen Joe Debler (Piscataway) and Ted Bassman (Scotch Plains), who recently died suddenly; former Vice-Chairmen Marty Matuskiewicz (Middlesex), Larry Newcombe (Scotch Plains) and John Sweeney (Middlesex) and his wife Pat, who baked homemade treats for so many Commission meetings; former North Plainfield Mayor and long-time Commission Legislative Chairman Frank McArdle.

Also remembered were former Commissioner Tony Addario (Watchung Mayor), Middlesex County Freeholder Director David Crabiel Senator Frank Lautenburg, and State Assemblyman and U.S. Congressman Bob Franks.

Chairman Murray also recognized Treasurer Bill Crosby of North Plainfield, who was a founding Commissioner of the GBFCC. Although he was under the weather and unable to attend today,

the Chairman praised him for his continued work on behalf of the residents of the basin, 50 years after the storm that started this Commission, and thank him on behalf of the residents that have already received flood relief, and those who will as work progresses.

Throughout the meeting and for quite some time following the Memorial Service, Chairman Murray answered question that residents had regarding their properties and neighborhoods. There were many concerns regarding started work that has yet to be completed, especially in the areas around Cap Lane. Chairman Murray noted that while some of this work has been awarded, there are portions that are being held up due to the ongoing real estate efforts at 207 Pond Avenue, which is presently in the process of condemnation.

Somerset County Representative Joe Skupien was quite helpful in addressing some of the residents concerns and misconceptions about effects in Middlesex, which they felt resulted from the completion of the levees in Bound Brook. Mr. Skupien noted that the flood protection in Bound Brook is really all addressing flooding issues from the Raritan, and not from the Green Brook.

Other questions relating to issues in Cromwell Park were referred to the Borough, as that is not part of the project area. Chairman Murray concluded the meeting with a conversation with residents of Heather Lane. As USACE has determined that the erosion experienced in that area is not related to the upstream pumps being operated at Segment B1 during TS Ida, the Chairman recommended that residents work with their State representatives to try to find disaster funding that could be utilized to repair the situation, working with the Borough and its procurement process.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 12:45 PM

Upcoming 2021 GBFCC Zoom meeting dates:

**Wednesday, October 4, 2023 – 7:30 PM**

**Wednesday, December 6, 2023 – 7:30 PM**

NAME	TOWN/CITY	GBFCC
Ramon Zidar		
Charles Zidar		
Francisca Hatcher		
Steven Hatcher		
JOAN KELLY	125 1st St. Middlesex	
JOHN MELILLO		
Eka Cirafdo	658 Bound Brook Rd Middlesex	
Brian McFarland	Middlesex	
Felicie McNeil <sup>for</sup> Over Dabney	City of Plainfield	
JOHN L. MADREW	Middlesex	
Gregory Cosentino	Middlesex	
Paul Oval	Middlesex NJ	
Cyndi Hoffman	Middlesex NJ	
JOE SKUPIEN	SOMERSET COUNTY	✓
Alice Tempel	Borough of South Plainfield	✓
MARK MEDICK	Middlesex	
HERMINIO GARCIA, JR	Middlesex	

NAME	TOWN/CITY	GBFCC
PAUL P. MAXCY	MIDDLESEX	
Clare LeVourne	Middlesex	
Jeanette De Jesus	Middlesex	
Paul Woy	Middlesex	
Thomas F. Butler	Martinsville	
Dennis K. Butler	"	
Milena Valchanova	Middlesex	
Shannon Quinn	Middlesex	
Nydia Guerrero	Middlesex	
Lauren / Bob Semonovick	Middlesex	
Judy Reedy	Middlesex	
Michelle Logue	Middlesex	
Amy Bigge	Middlesex	
Will Yawo	MIDDLESEX	
Robert Pessino	Middlesex	
Kuis Calume	Middlesex	
John Dowd	Middlesex	

NAME	TOWN/CITY	GBFCC
Claude and Sherley Penque	Middlesex	
Barbara Benson	Middlesex	
LEE RANDL	MIDDLESEX	
Guido Passeri	Scotch Plains N.J.	
TOM + Amy THORNTON	Middlesex, NJ	
Antoinette Kijewski	Middlesex, NJ	
Steve + Tina Rhodes	Middlesex, NJ	
Louise Crede	Middlesex	
Robert Schuck	Middlesex	
Sharon Schuck	Middlesex	
Ann Bird	Middlesex	
PATRICIA Guidi	"	
Nic ANDRUS	"	
Jack COSTA	"	
Anton Getz	Edison, NJ	
TERESA PANLOWSKA	Middlesex	
Mary Flannery	Middlesex	

NAME	TOWN/CITY	GBFCC
John SLOOTMAKER	MIDDLESEX	
Haley Fuentes	Middlesex	
Anthony Fuentes	Middlesex	
MARC KRANZ	MIDDLESEX	
ALEXIS OSTERHORN	Middlesex	
Nancy Piwowar	Plainfield Resident	
Dove Oliver	middlesex	
John. Hommas	Middlesex	
Robert Cygan	MIDDLESEX	
Al Platten	MDSX	
Ken Beck	MDSX	
Rob Givlies	RIDGEFIELD	
J. Miller	Middlesex	