

**GREEN BROOK FLOOD CONTROL COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

LOCATION: Virtual Meeting

DATE: December 4, 2024

MEETING CONVENED: 7:35 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 NY District
Thomas Slowinski . NJDEP
Rich O'Connor . Engineer, GBFCC

Rob Zucker . Winning Strategies
Anthony Panzarino . Middlesex County
John Ferguson . South Plainfield

Alvaro Medeiros . Berkeley Heights

MINUTES

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

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer's report can be found on the GBFCC website. The payment of bills from the Courier-News (RFP ads), Chairman Murray (travel to Washington DC), Tina Totten, Grotto Engineering & Winning Strategies were approved to be paid.

BUDGET

The 2025 budget was introduced at the October meeting. The budget calls for a 2% increase in the member contributions. A correction was made to the final revenues projected for 2024, correcting a formulaic error. The 2025 budget was moved for adoption (as originally drafted) and approved at this meeting, with all present voting in the affirmative.

2025 EXECUTIVE BOARD

Chairman Murray expressed a willingness to continue as Chairman for the 2025 year, as did Mr. Woska (Vice-Chair) and Mr. Picard (Treasurer). The Chairman asked for any other nominations for any of the executive board positions but received none. A motion approving the executive board for 2025 was moved and approved by all present.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Commission had some internal emails, but no outside correspondence.

ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS . Edward Wrocenski, Project Manager

Lower Basin

Construction continues. Flood gates were installed a week ago on South Lincoln Ave. Ray Murray, as well as representatives from DEP, were present. Over the next weeks the contractor will water test the gates to be sure they are functioning as intended. That is planned for mid-December. In connection with that, will do work on the road. Hope to re-open up the road, if the weather permits.

Will be ripping up asphalt to do base layer, installing gas line, also some curb & gutter work. The plan would be to complete that before winter sets in.

Mr. Murray commented on being present for the flood gates installation. The gates are 81-feet long, 12-feet high and 6-foot wide and weigh 37 tons each. The gates were lifted off the trailer with two cranes and spun into place. Colonel Young was on sight to observe the installation as well as other representatives from the State. It was a nice gathering of people to watch the unique process and sheer magnitude of the gates.

Mr. Wrocenski reports the push will now be on to other segments. The Engineering Department is working hard on updating modeling. As you know, over the years this project has been limited due to a lack of funding. Now with access to more money, we are looking to do bigger and better things. One thing that is a hinderance is that we cannot induce flooding as we build. Engineering is working diligently to see where we can build. Within a few weeks they will identify which segments can be built and in what sequence. Also looking to incorporate other segments, for example the design work on Segment I-J-K. Hope to move things along a bit faster.

Once the proposed schedule is in place, we will meet with NJDEP to discuss what type of risk they feel comfortable with in terms of inducing flooding. For example, if the modeling shows that a segment may increase flooding in an area by several inches, but you are spreading that inherent risk out over the time it takes to build the segment, there may be a point where we can agree to build to keep project moving forward.

There is on-going repair work in Bound Brook, Segment U-R-T, resulting from damage following Hurricane Ida. Plan to finish up by February. Will need to come back when it is reasonable to plant grass, etc. to properly restore the disturbed areas.

Mr. Murray - Are there time constraints on the options under Segment C2 & H? Is it right that they need to be awarded soon or need to be left to another construction contract?

Mr. Wrocenski - Those options go until March 2025. The work that was awarded in 2023, included the floodwall & flood gates that are now in place, but there were also, some levees and pump stations in that C2 & H segment. Engineering will allow us to award those pieces in early January which will allow the contractor to keep working as that work will not induce flooding.

207 Pond Update . We are taking a dual approach to acquiring this property. Condemnation process is on-going, but also our Real Estate Division is simultaneously working with the property owners to see where they are at. Property owner did their own appraisal. The attorneys will be meeting soon to see what is reasonable. This is a good sign because at least the property owners are talking, which had not been the case before.

Mr. Paul Woska . When do you expect South Lincoln Avenue to be re- opened?

Mr. Wrocenski – The initial plan was for the end of calendar year. If it can be paved now, there is still a chance, but we may need to wait until Spring. It is weather dependent, and I don't have that answer right now. Unfortunately, we were delayed with having to move water lines and were pushed back a couple months.

Mr. Alvaro Medeiros, Berkley Heights . Any updates for the Upper Basin portion of the project?

Mr. Wrocenski – We have reached a tentatively selected plan. We presented it to the State and some of the Counties and will also present it to North Plainfield in January. It is a non-structural plan; currently including 59 structures (mostly in Plainfield - 47 elevations & floodproofing and 12 ring walls) We will be continuing to optimize and looking to add to the plan. Still a couple years down the road. Channel modifications are still being examined.

There was discussion/explanation about the original vision of the Upper Basin modifications at Watchung Reservation at the Connell Corporate site and the proposed dam at the quarry which were deemed to be too expensive to build. These non-structural modifications would be in place of that as a way to provide residents with some measure of flood protection.

Clarification about ring walls. A ring wall is a basically a smaller version of a flood wall, around a singular structure to provide protection, as opposed to protecting a whole neighborhood.

Mr. Wrocenski will research & get back to Mr. Murray regarding the level of protection the proposed non-structural modifications would provide to that area. (i.e. will these structures have 50-year protection or is it the entire area that has 50-year protection)

Mr. Murray - A question that came up during my visit today with staff of Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman, Congressman Kean, and Senator Booker was about the timing of the GRR report for Upper Basin. What is the current timing of the GRR?

Mr. Wrocenski – GRR report was originally scheduled to go through 2025. Because of additional work, added requirements, and some additional confidence in our answers that the higher Headquarters is looking at, we are asking for additional funding and additional time on the study. Our goal would be to get into WRDA 2026, but that would rest on how long it takes to get additional funding for the study. That resource request is being made now. The Chief's report in a May / June timeframe is still hopeful, if not it will be pushed back to WRDA 2028. The main goal of the GRR is to re-authorize the whole project.

Mr. Murray - We will be happy to help in any way we can, and we will want to weigh in with the Congressional offices and get their support for the funding increase and the additional time for the GRR. If we can help with that push for funding and get into WRDA 2026. We don't want to see things pushed back.

NJ DEP . Thomas Slowinski

A good example of a ring wall is in Bound Brook at the corner of East Avenue and Route 28. The apartment complex has a ring wall system around it with a pump system and backup generator.

The installation of the two flood gates at Lincoln Avenue has been a big push.

The week before Thanksgiving, Somerset County installed guide rails along the railroad tracks in the Bound Brook industrial park area where the stop log structure is. Apparently, trucks were driving up into the levee and starting to damage it. The County repaired it and the guide rail has been installed for the whole length, about 270-feet, and that will provided good protection.

Ida repairs in Segment U are finished and moving feet down to Segments R-1 & R-2. There was a real estate issue up there which slowed down progress, but now it is rectified, and things are moving along.

COMMENTS FROM THE COUNTIES

Middlesex County – No representative present at report time.

Somerset County . No representative present.

Union County – No representative present.

GBFCC ENGINEER . Rich O'Connor

No report.

WINNING STRATEGIES . Rob Zucker

Mr. Murray has already mentioned our day on Capitol Hill today to make the rounds with the New Jersey delegates that represent the Project. We updated them on: 1) the positive news about the project agreement which is unlocking the DRSA funds 2) status of 207 Pond property, knowing that if there is any kind of an impasse or further delay, we may need help from Capitol Hill to avoid going out for new bids which would guarantee to be at higher prices and 3) share information about the GRR Report.

Congressman Kean indicated that they expect the 2024 WRDA, which has a provision for expediting the GRR revision, to be on the House floor next week and cleared before the end of this Congress. We were met with interest from each of the three offices . Congresswoman Watson-Coleman, Congressman Kean and Senator Booker. We plan future efforts in early 2025 to connect with Senator-elect Kim after he names his staff to brief them on the project.

There was interest for site visits in the Spring, especially as this is the largest infrastructure project East of the Mississippi, and gaining an understanding how impactful the project is and how sometimes Capitol Hill needs to be involved to keep things on pace.

It was a productive day. It is a hallmark example of the Commissions commitment to advocacy by always keeping lines of communication open.

Other Questions

None.

MEETING ADJOURNED: The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Upcoming GBFCC meeting dates:

Wednesday, February 5, 2025, 7:30 pm . via Zoom

Wednesday, April 2, 2025, 7:30 pm . via Zoom

Wednesday, June 4, 2025, 7:30 pm . via Zoom

Saturday, August 2, 2025, 9:30 am . in-person, Middlesex American Legion

Wednesday, October 8, 2025, 7:30 pm . via Zoom (2nd Wednesday)

Wednesday, December 3, 2025, 7:30 pm . via Zoom