



City of Alexandria
Ad Hoc Stormwater Utility and Flood Mitigation Advisory Group Meeting
Thursday, June 10, 2021 | 7:00 p.m. | Virtual Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Advisory Group Members Present: Councilman John Chapman, John Hill, Cheryl Leonard, Katherine Waynick, Dino Drudi, Charlotte Hall, Brian Sands, Christine Thuot, Howard “Skip” Maginniss

Advisory Group Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Mark Jinks, City Manager; Gloria Sitton, City Clerk; Yon Lambert, Director of Transportation & Environmental Services (T&ES); Terry Suehr, Director of Project Implementation (DPI); Bill Skrabak, T&ES Deputy Director, Infrastructure and Environmental Quality; Jeff DuVal, T&ES Deputy Director, Operations; Jesse Maines, T&ES Division Chief, Stormwater Management; Erin Bevis-Carter, T&ES Division Chief, Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure; Jessica Lassetter, T&ES; Michaela Broyles, T&ES; Mitch Dillon, DPI; Alex Carroll, T&ES; Matt Landes, DPI Division Chief, Leadership & Project Management

The meeting began at 7:03 p.m.

1. Electronic Meeting Notice

Mr. Landes began the meeting by reading the electronic meeting notice and went over some general housekeeping items.

2. Welcome

Mr. Jinks provided opening remarks for the Advisory Group’s inaugural meeting.

3. Introductions

Each Advisory Group Member introduced themselves, explained who they represent, how they plan to communicate with those they represent, and how flooding has impacted them individually. Mr. Landes introduced City Staff.

4. Advisory Group Mission & Purpose

Mr. Lambert reviewed the Advisory Group’s purpose and purview as established by City Council Resolution No. 2977. He also introduced some potential deliverables for the Advisory Group to consider, including an annual report to City council, an Advisory Group Charter, a budget recommendation letter, and input on the City’s spending plan for American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Member Input:

Mr. Drudi inquired why there is not a representative from the Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) on the Advisory Group and suggested that the Council Resolution be modified to include such representation. Councilman Chapman said the focus when forming the Advisory Group was on City resident representation. Mr. Chapman added that he would like to see how the current Advisory Group structure works before adding more members.



5. Governance of Advisory Group

Ms. Sitton provided a summary of the City's Boards & Commissions Member Handbook and parliamentary procedures. Specific topics included guidelines for civic discourse, member attendance and quorum, Robert's Rules of Order, open meeting requirements, conflicts of interest, Advisory Group communications, and the Chair position. Mr. Landes added that the group would have an opportunity to nominate and elect a Chair at its next meeting.

6. Organizational Structure

Mr. Landes provided an overview of the Flood Mitigation Program's organizational structure. He added that the Advisory Group is a conduit between the community and City staff to provide feedback and insight on flood mitigation budgets, policies, and programs.

Member Input:

Mr. Drudi requested clarity on how the City departments involved in the Flooding Management Task Force interact with T&ES on flooding issues. Mr. Landes provided examples of how departments were involved in and contributed to Task Force deliverables. Mr. Lambert added that this cross-departmental team helped develop recommendations, and now the Flood Action Alexandria program is implementing those recommendations.

7. Stormwater & Flooding Updates

Mr. Maines provided updates on various aspects of the Flood Action Alexandria program, including:

- Large capacity projects in the City's Capital Improvement Program
- Neighborhood spot improvements
- Operations and maintenance
- Sanitary Sewer Asset Renewal Program
- State legislation
- Pilot Grant Program
- Communications and neighborhood engagement
- Early warning and data collection
- Stream restoration
- FEMA floodplain remapping

Member Input:

Ms. Waynick asked if text alerts are part of the City's future plans for early warning. Mr. Lambert indicated that the City is working on expanding the current alert system.

Mr. Hill inquired what the total scope of work is for flood mitigation. Mr. Maines noted that although more projects could arise after the current 10-year plan, the 11 large-scale capacity projects currently funded will provide the most relief for most people who are experiencing flooding.

Mr. Sands asked if an estimate was available of the number and the value of properties that are affected by flooding in the City. Mr. Maines indicated that the City is getting a better



understanding of the properties that are being affected via neighborhood meetings, Alex311, and improved data collection techniques.

Ms. Thuot asked how residents/neighborhoods that have been impacted by flooding can be reflected on the flooding heat map presented and how other projects can be identified and funded. Mr. Maines explained that the City's data collection methods are improving, and that data can inform project locations. Mr. Landes added that residents can have their property reflected on the flooding heat map by reporting flooding to Alex311, which stores GIS data related to service requests.

Councilman Chapman indicated he intends to propose revisions to the City's Boards & Commissions sunset policy to allow the Advisory Group to exist for the duration of the projects slated to be completed. This would convert the ad hoc advisory group to a standing committee. Mr. Chapman will provide updates and seek input on this at a future meeting.

8. American Rescue Plan Act

Mr. Lambert presented an overview of the City's efforts to allocate funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), including the community outreach process, proposed projects for flood mitigation, and how the Advisory Group could provide input.

Member Input:

Ms. Waynick asked if the funds already programmed into the 10-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) will be reallocated given the additional federal funding available and whether the ARPA funds will allow the City to add new projects to the CIP or accelerate any current project timelines. Mr. Lambert explained that most of the proposed projects for ARPA funding are not currently in the CIP, adding that ARPA funding may enable the City to do more projects than what is currently listed in the CIP.

Mr. Drudi asked if any of the proposed projects listed involve removing a substantial number of trees. Mr. Skrabak explained that some trees could be removed depending on their proximity to a stream or channel, adding that the Holmes Run channel maintenance project may involve some vegetation removal.

9. Stormwater Management Primer & Meeting #2

Mr. Landes noted that in the future staff would provide the Advisory Group members with primer document(s) and additional reference materials to provide contextual information surrounding stormwater management and the City's development requirements and review process.

Staff will also send a meeting poll to the Advisory Group to determine the date and time of the next meeting, which is expected to take place this summer.

10. Member Updates/Q&A

Advisory Group members were asked to name two issues they believe deserve a deeper dive to help establish a baseline understanding for the group. Members identified the following issues for future discussion:

- The total scope and scale of flooding challenges in Alexandria



- Methods for communicating overall progress in mitigating flooding, as opposed to individual project progress
- How the Advisory Group fits into and can influence the City's budget process
- An overall financial picture of the total costs (short- and long-term) to mitigate flooding in the City and how we communicate those needs with the community
- City codes related to flooding and stormwater management
- Design standards and development requirements for stormwater
- Limitations on City action due to Dillon Rule/lack of enabling legislation from the State
- Availability of reports and findings from maintenance inspections
- Future funding options for stormwater management and flood mitigation
- Lifespan of projects and potential to revisit previous project areas
- Information on what residents can do to protect their properties from flooding, including mitigation measures, permit requirements, contractor references, etc.
- Resources currently devoted to flood mitigation, including staff
- Criteria used for prioritizing flood mitigation projects
- Process for implementing projects and capacity to deliver projects

11. Public Comment Period

During the meeting, staff answered some questions in the meeting chat (transcript attached). The remaining questions in the chat were answered live during the public comment period.

Mr. Jim Burkart asked how residents can know when stream gauges have reached a level that portends flooding in neighborhoods, and what data was obtained from stream gauges during this evening's rain event.

Mr. Skrabak noted that while it is possible for neighborhoods to flood from streams overflowing, most of the recent flooding issues that have been identified are due to capacity limitations in the stormwater collection system and not from stream overflow. Thus, stream gauge data wouldn't necessarily capture or indicate localized flooding. However, the City is expanding its use of rain gauges and radar technology to predict and record flooding on a more localized level. Additional information on this can be shared at a future meeting.

Mr. Patrick Moran asked if staff could differentiate between surface flooding and sanitary backflows on the flooding heat map. Mr. Moran also asked whether spot improvements and capacity improvements could be reflected on the map to show how projects correlate with reported flooding.

Mr. Landes noted that as of recently, the City has set up its Alex311 flood reporting system to differentiate between types of flooding, which could be reflected on future maps.

Ms. Rose Esber asked what immediate flood mitigation could be done on private properties (i.e. rain barrels), and whether staff could visit homes and businesses to recommend specific mitigation measures. Ms. Esber also asked if staff could indicate what neighborhood(s) will be improved by the capacity and spot improvement projects that have been identified and funded.

Mr. Skrabak noted that the City does encourage residents to consider improvements such as rain barrels or reducing impervious surfaces. Mr. Maines



explained that the City could also provide some general guidance on types of improvements that could help minimize flood risk on private property depending on the source of the flooding. The pilot grant program could also reimburse residents for certain floodproofing investments. Mr. Maines also noted that the City could explore a project reporting feature in the future to provide more helpful information on various projects.

Ms. Rose Esber asked how residents could report flooding aside from web-based forms. Mr. Landes explained that residents may also call Alex311 to report flooding if they do not have internet access. The City is also open to other suggestions for receiving information from residents.

Two individuals also spoke during the public comment period:

Ms. Anne Liddle agreed with earlier comments that it would be helpful to have some technical assistance from City staff in recommending floodproofing measures on private property, and she requested that additional resources be made available online. Ms. Liddle also requested that City staff investigate the sewer line near Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy, which could have some bottleneck issues that causes flooding.

Mr. Skrabak noted that staff can provide a range of floodproofing options for residents to explore based on the source of the flooding on their property. More information will be available in the coming weeks. Staff is also looking into the Pitt Street & Gibbon Street area and evaluating the issue based on resident input.

Mr. Patrick Moran commented on the importance of distinguishing between stormwater and sewer infrastructure, and noted that the City should ensure equitable solutions are presented. Mr. Moran also suggested incorporating water table considerations into the permit process.

The meeting ended at 9:47 p.m.



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Meeting Chat Transcript

20:28:48

From Jim Burkart to All panelists: How do we know when the stream gauges are reaching and have reached a level that floods the neighborhood?

20:42:39

From Jim Burkart to All panelists: What data did you obtain after this evening's floods from the stream gauges?

20:43:27

From Brian Sands to All panelists: Looking forward to the assessment of the number and value of properties that are at flood risk, particularly surface flooding. On a related note, Floodfactor.com is a very sophisticated, comprehensive and easy to use flood risk assessment tool, <https://floodfactor.com/>, created by the non-profit First Street Foundation, <https://firststreet.org/>. It might be worth asking if they would be willing to provide the City with their data and estimates for properties in the city.

20:49:18

From Patrick Moran to All panelists: Helpful presentation. Thank you, Mr. Maines. Can we differentiate on the heat map which is surface flooding and where are there sanitary capacity back flows? Can we also see on that same map where there have been spot fixes and other maintenance activities and to the extent each is expected alleviate 311 issues?

20:58:39

From Rose Esber to All panelists:

1. What immediate flood mitigation can be done on properties: e.g., massive use of rain barrels, roof gardens, retaining pools, etc.?
2. Could city staff visit homes and business owners' neighborhoods and suggest short-term or immediate mitigations actions that we can take now but that won't negatively affect neighbors?
3. Could you please indicate what neighborhood or area of flooding will be improved by spot improvements and CIP capacity projects when you post the information?

Thank you.

21:04:54

From Rose Esber to All panelists: As Mr. Drudi mentioned, it is quite important that storm water plans are coordinated with environmental planning and climate change mitigation.

And as Ms. Thuot mentioned, many citizens are not aware of 311 (we just learned about 311 on Upper King Street this year and yet experienced four massive floods). Some citizens do not have access to internet. Others are unable to use the internet for various reasons. There should be options for reporting problems.

21:12:59



From Jim Burkart to All panelists: Who are the contractors / engineers that were recently reviewing the Hoofs Run culvert and drains near Linden Street this week? What are they doing?

Page Break

21:14:58

From Yon Lambert to All panelists: The City currently has a contractor (Doetsch Environmental Services) performing debris removal in the culvert

21:33:41

From John Craig to All panelists: Will the heat map on your web site better show street names? On the current heat map, I can't tell exactly where the projects are located.

21:36:19

From Patrick Moran to All panelists: Thanks. On the a map, It would also be helpful to show impervious surfaces as well as stormwater credit applications.

21:39:54

From Rose Esber to All panelists: Thank you Mr. Maines. It would be encouraging to know that all the maintenance work you are doing is having a direct impact on flooding and on what area of the city.

21:40:56

From Rose Esber to All panelists: Thank you to the advisory committee and the city for all the work you are doing.

21:41:24

From John Hill to All panelists: thanks to all!