

Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority
9:00 A.M. Via Zoom
November 19, 2020 - Meeting Notes

Board Members Present: Edna Fund, Lewis County Commissioner; Vickie Raines, Grays Harbor County Commissioner; Tye Menser, Thurston County Commissioner; Ron Averill, City of Centralia; Trent Lougheed, City of Chehalis; Frank Gordon, City of Aberdeen; Steve Lyle, Town of Bucoda; Darrin Raines, City of Cosmopolis; Lonnie Willey, Town of Pe Ell; Brian Shay, City of Hoquiam; Dan Wood, City of Montesano.

Board Members Absent: Shawn O'Neill, City of Napavine; Richard Armstrong, City of Oakville.

Others Present: Kris Koski, Rick Sangder, J. Vander Stoep, Jay Gordon, Lee Napier, Nat Kale.

Handouts/Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Meeting Notes from September 17, 2020
- Local Projects List
- Financial Report
- See https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias_1492/34798/meetings.aspx#Nov2020

1. Call to Order

Chair Raines called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

2. Introductions

Scott conducted a roll call as attendees called in. There was a quorum.

3. Approval of agenda

There was consensus to approve; the Financial Report may be given earlier as Lee may need to leave early due to a potential conflict.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes – September 17, 2020

There were no corrections or changes, and the notes were approved by consensus.

5. Approval of Executive Committee Action

Scott stated a letter went to the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) regarding the retention project in the Chehalis Basin. The comment period ended two days ago. He summarized the letter. Also provided was a table showing the actual fish that made it above Rainbow Falls and a detailed report from WDFW.

J. Vander Stoep explained a slide that estimated abundance impacts from proposed action and no action alternatives. The NEPA report states the impact on fish is nearly negligible. This project will not be built without mitigation measures and it is still unknown if this project will move forward. J. reported that the Corps stated this is the only alternative out of 61 that merits evaluating further.

Dan moved to affirm the letter; second by Brian. There was consensus.

6. 2021 Local Projects List

Scott gave an update on 2021-2023 Local Projects. At the last meeting, the Flood Authority learned that the projects totaled about \$10.4 million. We are continuing to work with project sponsors to check budgets and scopes of work, and to try to shape projects so we have proposals that are doable, funded, implemented, and put into effect. Some projects are taking time to get to that point, but shortly there will be a body of projects for the next biennium. Attachment A showed four categories and the projects included in each: Flood and Fish Projects; Flood Conveyance Projects; Flood Plan/Study/Design Projects; Flood Pump Station Projects. A map showed the distribution of the various projects.

Scott stated these projects started at \$10.4 million and we have brought them down to \$9.6 million. Scott's recommendation is that we endorse moving the entire package to the Chehalis Basin Board. The average (historically) has been \$9.9 million, and we are within the ballpark of the scale of request. We would like to move forward with the idea of continuing to work with scopes and budgets. We have also talked about finding a way to ensure that after the projects are selected, the local sponsors have the capability to maintain them. The recommendation is also that there is a crosswalk between how the Flood Authority projects line up to meet (or not meet) Chehalis Basin Board's priorities and outcomes.

Ron stated Centralia did not watch the Skookumchuck levee and it became overgrown with trees. When the Rails to Trails project went through, the railroad maintained it until the state parks took it over, and then it was not maintained and there were many problems during the 2007 flood. The Flood Authority projects have no funding for operations and maintenance.

J. Vander Stoep spoke to levees and maintenance. After the 2007 flood the Corps' intention was to build levees along the I-5 corridor – this would not have been good for jurisdictions in the Basin. Early on, a survey was done of 30-40 jurisdictions that had levees and they found no money from any jurisdiction that was spent on maintenance of levees. That is a chronic problem across this Basin, and we need to be mindful of this. We need to figure out a way to provide for maintenance for the long term.

Dan asked what the process is if we do not get all of the funding we are requesting. Scott stated the Projects Committee is completing an exercise as to how quickly a project can come online and how much benefit it will provide. The project that comes on fastest will score higher. The slower ones will be a lower-tier project. Once a project has been started, that is a prioritizing tool. Initial ranking pointed out that some proposals did not have a lot of detail, so ranking is helpful to know which projects need more help.

Dan asked why the capital budget would pay for pump stations that are already there. Scott stated these jurisdictions are distressed areas and do not have the funding. Kris stated storm water rates could pay for this type of infrastructure; however, flooding is not always uniform around a city and the timing can be highly irregular. That does not help the case for increasing rates. Sewer and water are constant, and we have comp plans we have to follow. Regarding maintenance, he suggested improving the application. Ask what staff, budget, or equipment does a jurisdiction have to maintain this? You could ask them to provide an O & M plan and when the same applicant comes back for another project, you have that plan to decide if they are entitled to more money.

After discussion, Scott stated he would work with Kris and Brian as to why the money should be made available for the pump station projects so there is a good argument for the capital budget on these projects.

Nat suggested looking at climate change forecasts and how they might affect projects. See UW CIG at <https://cig.uw.edu/resources/analysis-tools/how-will-heavy-rains-change-in-western-washington/>.

Dan moved to approve recommended projects list, second by Ron. There was consensus.

7. Approval of 2021 Flood Warning System Annual O&M Costs

Scott stated that Attachment A shows an ~\$8,000 increase from last year. In 2019 a couple of stream gages were paid for by the capital budget for six months. This year we will be paying full maintenance. There are costs also to add 25 more sensors to the network because last year we brought on Thurston County's 11 stream and precipitation gages and tied them into the network, as approved by the Flood Authority. Attachment B recommends (1) keeping allocation the same as in the past and (2) proportionate increases for each county. Ron moved to approve; second by Brian. There was consensus.

8. Approval of Nominations Process for 2021 Flood Authority Positions

Scott stated we need to set our positions for 2021. Only Flood Authority members, not alternates, are authorized to occupy the positions. If this process is approved, Scott will send out the form and members should return form and at the January meeting there will be a vote. J. Vander Stoep spoke to the two new Lewis County Commissioners and they are willing to have Edna continue on the Flood Authority board, for the foreseeable future. There was consensus to approve the process.

10. Financial Report

Lee stated September expenditures are \$28,299.13 for salaries and consultants. There is a line item under consultants for invoice amount and half of the contract for gage relocation. The Lewis County BOCC approved Resolutions 20-341 and 20-342 with the increased budgets.

Expenditures for October were \$8,341.21 including staff and consultants.

9. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

11. Reports

a. Chair's Report

Edna and Jay were in a meeting with the Office of Chehalis Basin with lots of good discussion. Grays Harbor County had seen high water in Westport earlier in the week that caused some damage.

b. Member Reports

Lewis County – Commissioner Fund stated Lewis County is also suffering from COVID and trying to keep people interested in flooding issues; non-profits and businesses are struggling.

Cosmopolis – Darrin stated the city had good tests for Mill Creek Dam; things are working well. Mill Creek did not come out of its banks, even with a lot of rain. There is additional work to be done but we have taken a big step to reduce flood hazards. The city's largest employer is ramping up to re-open at the end of the year.

Hoquiam – Brian said he is continuing to push forward on flooding issues; last week he submitted a grant to FEMA to fund up to \$40 million for the west Hoquiam levee. We are exhausting all possible sources to construct this levee.

Aberdeen – Kris stated the city is continuing to work on funding for levee; submitted for FEMA funding and through the EDA two huge grant packages. We had big tide this week but only minor flooding.

Montesano – Dan stated the city just wrapped up the wastewater treatment plant and thanks to the Flood Authority for the help on that. The city is looking at water and sewer and storm water increases. An audit was just completed, and while there was no finding, there was a note that we are not funded enough for repair and replacement. We are looking out for next 10 years for all three categories which relates to the earlier discussion regarding maintaining what you have. We will not be the highest in the county, but we are looking at some significant jumps. Thanks to all of the jurisdictions for supporting each other.

Bucoda – Steve stated the dike is holding, and the Skookumchuck is staying within its banks. Water line replacement has been delayed due to COVID. Bucoda put in for a contract with Ecology for fixing some homes; perhaps when we meet again Ecology could give a report on what they are doing. Chair Raines thought perhaps include a memo with the agenda.

c. Chehalis Basin Board

J stated this process is at a critical point for local projects, levees, etc. So far, the main portion for these projects coming to the Flood Authority has been for the OCB, governor's work group and legislators. We have such a powerful coalition and with the Tribes, we have brought the benefits to basin communities. Responding to the SEPA document on water retention, it appears to be saying if you build this dam, it will destroy the fish in the basin. That is not what the data said, but it is the impression that was given. Now we have the NEPA document which states that the impact to the fish is almost too small to identify. Can we get people back to the table to talk about water retention? The governor asked that that discussion go on and look for another alternative. Meanwhile, the Corps looked at 61 alternatives and they do not see another one. Related to this meeting, the Board is not going to come up with a genuine budget request because we do not know what will be ready to go forward. In December, the OCB will have a placeholder budget request; if there is a real request and push to go forward, it will be decided in February or March. The process is at risk because the charge of the legislators is to fish species and flood reduction – if we do not have (a real request), the whole process may stop. Make clear that that process may impact what we are able to put forward and be successful.

c. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

12. Confirm next regular meeting.

The next meeting will be on January 21, 2021 via Zoom. Topics will be nominations and voting for chair and vice chair, the governor's update and what the Flood Authority and OCB will look like in that update. Scott said emails will be going out soon regarding the flood warning system.

Adjournment was at 10:38.