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Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority

Meeting 9:00 A.M.

**Montesano Public Library
125 S Main St, Montesano**

July 16, 2015 - Meeting Notes

Board Members Present: Ken Estes, City of Montesano; Bud Blake, Thurston County Commissioner; Edna Fund, Lewis County Commissioner; Julie Balmelli-Powe, City of Chehalis; Kathi Hoder, City of Aberdeen; Lonnie Willey, Town of Pe Ell; Frank Chestnut, City of Cosmopolis; Alan Vanell, Town of Bucoda; Vickie Raines, Grays Harbor County Commissioner; Dan Thompson, City of Oakville; Ron Averill, City of Centralia

Board Members Excused: Lionel Pinn, City of Napavine

Staff Present: Scott Boettcher; Jim Kramer, Facilitator

Others Present: Please see sign-in sheet

Handouts/Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Meeting Notes from June 18, 2015
- Prioritized List for 2015-2017 Biennium
- Executive Committee Recommendation for Wishkah Rd Project and Mill Creek Project
- Financial Report
- See here https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias_1492/34798/meetings.aspx#July2015

1. Call to Order

Chair Raines called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

2. Introductions

Self-introductions were made by all attending.

3. Approval of Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda and it was approved unanimously.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes from June 18, 2015

There were no corrections to the meeting notes and they were approved unanimously.

5. Prioritized List of Projects Recommended by the Projects Committee for 2015-2017 Biennial Funding

Mr. Averill stated that the original prioritized list recommended by the Projects Committee in October 2014 was used as basis for the updated, refined list presented today (see here https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1492/images/Prioritized%20Local%20Flood%20Protection%20Projects%2007152015.pdf). The Projects Committee's updated list recommends: (1) Pulling out and putting WSDOT-connected projects into a separate budget category; (2) Removing discontinued Elma/Porter project; (3) Factoring in \$900,000 in 2013-15 carry over funding for small projects. New

recommended list totals \$15.2 million for local projects, \$7.25 million for habitat, and \$500,000 for farm pads. Flood proofing does not have an amount set aside because there is no list of specific projects for that. The \$900,000 carried forward could grow when OFM finishes closing out the 2013-15 biennial budget. The Project Committee had not been involved in the habitat restoration projects to date so it did not know what role if any it should take.

Mr. Kramer stated the Governor's Chehalis Basin Work Group will meet later this month to discuss the Projects Committee's most recent prioritized list of local projects proposed for 2015-17 funding, as well to hear a proposal from WDFW regarding leading the effort to identify and prioritize aquatic species restoration projects and expenditures. OFM will make the final decision based on the recommendations of the Flood Authority and the Governor's Work Group. The Governor's Work Group had an overall strategy for long term and short term actions in the Basin. One element of the near-term strategy is funding for local, priority flood proofing actions. There is currently no specific plan for that. Additionally, interest in local flood proofing tends to peak immediately after a flood and wane from there. A concern is finding the right balance between projects that can use the money now and leaving enough money to respond to flood proofing requests if there is a flood. In the course of this next year a more detailed strategy for flood proofing needs to emerge, e.g., should there be reserve funds for flood proofing?

Mr. Averill stated during the last cycle there was \$1.8 million for flood proofing and he suggested looking at that range.

Mr. Boettcher stated the Flood Authority would need to make decisions today on projects and also policy decisions. He summarized the projects list and the money attached to each project as shown on Attachment A, which was included in the packets.

Mr. Averill stated that project dollar amounts are preliminary figures. When a project is started the costs sometimes go up. For the last funding cycle the Flood Authority had to move money around. Also, some projects are fairly large and costly. The Projects Committee is concerned about allocating money that can't be spent during this biennium.

Regarding farm pads, Mr. Ogden (retired) has reported to Mr. Boettcher that there was interest in additional farm pads in Grays Harbor County and initial ones in Thurston County. He will forward a report on what is outstanding. Mr. Averill reminded the Board that farm pad money is supplemented by the Conservation Commission.

There are no plans in place for WSDOT to widen I-5 at Dillenbaugh Creek.

Mr. Averill stated the final transportation budget came in at \$75 million in "connect Washington" projects for I-5 in the Basin, using the new taxing money. Of that, \$40 million is going towards the Chamber Way Bridge. \$35 million is designated to other I-5 projects during the biennium. The Projects Committee talked to Representative Ed Orcutt about the Legislature's need for more precision on funding transportation-related flood reduction in the Basin. The Projects Committee (and others) will work to create this precision. A challenge is not knowing whether or not there will be a dam. Until the EIS is done we won't know the answer to that but in the meantime we can work with WSDOT and others to take a closer look at WSDOT projects and WSDOT-related projects (and do so under various scenarios). The Flood Authority talked about projects on SR6, the Black River Project and projects on I-5

that would mitigate flooding. Chair Raines stated that the Governor's Work Group will discuss this matter too when they meet later in the month.

Mr. Averill stated Phase II at the airport has not been approved by the Chehalis Tribe.

Regarding the Mill Creek Dam and Wishkah Road Projects, Mr. Boettcher stated that the conclusion by Watershed Science and Engineering (WSE) was that insufficient documentation was readily available to demonstrate that both projects could clearly meet stated community objectives. The Executive Committee thought feasibility assessments could be done as a tool to demonstrate this (see <https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/1492/images/Executive%20Committee%20Request%2007082015.pdf>). They asked the Project Committee to consider the Wishkah Rd and Mill Creek projects for feasibility assessments to demonstrate that project and community objectives could be met. In the second part of the memo from Mr. Boettcher the recommendation suggests that projects that exceed \$500,000 be considered for such feasibility assessments. Furthermore, the recommendation suggests that feasibility assessments should precede project design and look at whether the project:

- a) Will achieve stated flood hazard reduction objectives;
- b) Will not have unintended adverse residual effects;
- c) Can be completed in the funding biennium or, if a multi-phased project, the phase being funded can be completed in the biennium;
- d) Does not have equally viable and potentially less costly alternatives.

Chair Raines stated Mr. Karpack (WSE) indicates that in order to determine further a clarifying additional feasibility study should be done. The Executive Committee said if that is what is required it will be forwarded to the Flood Authority. They did not determine that is what should be done. As far as setting criteria for further projects (such as the dike at Aberdeen or the airport project) whether or not to do additional analysis should be discussed.

Mr. Kramer stated Mr. Karpack was not making a "should" statement. He was saying he cannot see that the benefits can be achieved. If that question is a concern then an additional analysis is needed. We are talking about feasibility, not cost benefit.

Chair Raines stated that the County Commissioners chose to remove the County as the sponsor for the Wishkah Rd project. The community went through a substantial rainfall event and a lot of outreach was done by the citizens in that area. As of Monday (7/13/2015) the County Commissioners voted to proceed with one of the alternatives: raise the road. That is at a cost of about \$600,000. The Commissioners have asked to extend the scope of work and if it is approved it will level the road and raise it in some areas and provide for water-over-roadway protection. We chose to do that because of the analysis in January which went to WSE. It showed there were inches of water over Wishkah Rd; however, up the road at long swamp there was feet of water over the roadway. It was Chair Raines' understanding that the road engineer and facilities supervisor did not support the project and the project will not provide the benefit it proposed. Other possible issues include eminent domain and condemnation, two actions taken by the County Commissioners. Chair Raines would like to move forward with the County raising the road and additional paving, and add to the project list in the next biennium a project that would take care of the long swamp area.

Mr. Kramer stated the Flood Authority needed to talk about the priority list, feasibility studies on two projects and other large projects. He asked for comments from the Flood Authority board and then the public. There would then be discussion and a decision.

Mr. Raines stated it will take 60 days to do this analysis and beginning the project would be pushed into October. The original design and engineering was to be done by the end of September. If a feasibility study is done then design will be finished in March or April and we will miss the fish window for 2016 which pushes us into 2017 and then we will miss the biennium funding. It will drive up the cost and put citizens at risk.

Mr. Chestnut did not support an additional assessment.

Ms. Hoder agreed with Mr. Chestnut

Mr. Estes stated he is on the committee and agreed to bring it to this group. This will raise the cost of every project and the money we get is hard to come by. This has never been required before; all of these projects were on the list for two years and now there's a new rule.

Mr. Kramer stated there is no proposal to do a cost benefit, rather a suggested recommendation from the Projects Committee for feasibility assessments.

Mr. Thompson stated the Flood Authority board has worked with WSE and he is one of the most beneficial contractors who have helped the Flood Authority get where it is. He developed software for just what we are doing. If you trust your contractors you go with the recommendation or you pull information from it. If we are going to spend money to do projects for benefit then we need to make sure the benefits are there. Let's look at the information that WSE gave us. If the recommendations are sound then we should give it more consideration. If we are going to recommend a feasibility study where will that lead us in the future? A feasibility study shows if the project will give the benefit. If the study is good and it shows that the citizens are safer then incorporate that in the total.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated we were able to iron out issues because we hired contractors that would do what we asked. We have always trusted WSE and now he is saying he doesn't have enough information. You can't ignore the information because you want to get your project done.

Mr. Averill stated that Mr. Karpack is a hydrologist. He is saying he is not sure if the project is beneficial and maybe there is another way that will work better. These are not new projects and they have to deal with the fish window. A nemesis of the Public Works director is a 3-month window to complete the project. It is late in the game for these two projects to require the analysis. He does like the idea that it could be part of a future process or incorporated into design.

Mr. Chestnut asked where the concerns were raised. Chair Raines stated they came from Representative Tharinger to Mr. Kramer to herself. Mr. Chestnut stated is concerned about the method by which this happened. He does not doubt that we need to vet projects but to do this at this point in these two projects' life is wrong.

Mr. Kramer asked for comments from the public.

Mr. Kersch commended the Flood Authority for putting Wishkah Rd. on the list. This project worked its way through the list and was set to get funding but it got diverted to Mary's River and the wastewater treatment plant. That was okay because it would get back on the list. An independent feasibility study was done to figure out the best way to stop flooding, raise the road or raise homes, etc. When the

study was done it was determined that a dike was the only way to stop flooding on Wishkah Rd. A dike in Aberdeen would also help Wishkah Rd and would fix it long term.

Mr. Smith stated the impetus of his petition was safety. When he read WSE's review it lost the scope of why this was started. We need to protect ourselves. The political stuff bothers him when we talk about saving lives.

Ms. Willis stated she went to the legislature for specific funding. Her concern was that it didn't fund because of lack of dollars. She asked if all the Flood Authority projects could not be funded would they look at Satsop and Wishkah Rd. It was not to say that the Cosmopolis project was not any good. If her conversation caused grief that was not the intention. Fish and Wildlife asked her to come on the Satsop project. They have done habitat analysis, survey work on the Satsop site and are looking to do a restoration project. Did the legislature put funding in the habitat column? She heard the Flood Authority is going to meet with WDFW.

Mr. Averill stated the Project Committee did not have Satsop on the list because it was funded in the last biennium. Mr. Kramer stated this was a habitat project. Mr. Averill stated the Wishkah project had money funded for a larger project. This is where the jurisdiction has the final call. We provided money as originally proposed.

Mr. Kramer stated the question is about Wishkah Rd and Mill Creek projects, priority list and suggestions for feasibility assessment of projects. Mill Creek and Wishkah should be considered separately. Regarding Wishkah Rd: the Flood Authority has the engineer's report and the conclusion with the AMEC report. WSE found that the benefits are not achievable because there are multiple points where access to homes is blocked by flooding and WSE concluded all points needed to be assessed to know the benefits. The County took action to address a larger part of Wishkah Rd than the project focus has been. The Flood Authority is not staffed to make engineering decisions and there are differences of opinion as to what to do on the project and the geographic scope of the project. The Flood Authority has relied on project sponsors in the past to address this type of issue. The Flood Authority can leave it to the project sponsor (Grays Harbor County) or it can take it upon itself and have the engineering consultants do more work to advise the Flood Authority.

After discussion it was thumbs up to have the project sponsor, Grays Harbor County, address the issues on the Wishkah project.

Mr. Kramer spoke next to the Mill Creek issue. The WSE report questions whether the project can achieve the benefits that have been stated. WSE says there is not sufficient information. The Flood Authority can proceed without asking Cosmopolis for additional analysis or ask Cosmopolis to do an assessment of the project to achieve benefits to justify the project.

After discussion it was thumbs up to move ahead on Mill Creek as it has been designed and not request additional analysis.

Mr. Kramer asked if there were additional comments regarding the project priority list as recommended by the Projects Committee. Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated she objects to pulling out two projects that could be funded by WSDOT. These would help Chehalis. Why should Chehalis wait for WSDOT? Let's look at the study (Dillenbaugh and Airport levee).

Mr. Averill stated these have not been pulled out. There is \$35 million sitting out there. He thinks we should identify immediate money. The problem with the airport levee is getting the Tribe to agree. Dillenbaugh Creek will be difficult because of differences in opinion with WSDOT and the City of Chehalis. Mr. Kramer stated raising the airport level will affect people upstream and downstream which could be detrimental.

Mr. Kramer stated there needs to be clarification from the Projects Committee regarding some sort of early stage analysis to look at options in the corridor so it is clear as to the order of how things are done. There needs to be discussions with Projects Committee and WSDOT to get us moving forward on a schedule. WSDOT is waiting for water retention structure decisions.

There were thumbs up on continued work with Work Group and Projects Committee to explore discussions with WSDOT actions on the I-5 corridor and develop strategy for a timeline.

Mr. Kramer stated the last issue is a recommendation on the feasibility assessment in design phase. Mr. Chestnut asked if we need to define or list criteria by which we vet projects, and is there criteria on dollar values.

Chair Raines asked that the Flood Authority table this topic for now. She will get an idea of the Work Group's thoughts and will present a proposal. There were thumbs up all around.

6. Update on Flood Openings

Mr. Boettcher stated two homes are to have flood openings installed next week and in August. These will be run through the entire process before new projects are taken on. There have been some issues that need to be worked through. A new map will be presented to Town of Bucoda and its flood ordinance will be updated. A Council Workshop will be held 7/28/2015 (7 p.m.).

7. Update: Outreach Committee

The Outreach Committee will be attending the County fairs in August. Ms. Hoder stated everyone is also invited to attend the Aberdeen City Council meeting on August 26th.

8. Advancing Chehalis Basin Strategy for the 2015-17 Biennium

Mr. Kramer stated the focus will be on a programmatic EIS; Ecology is the lead. The scoping notice will be the first step to identify the purpose and need for the work, what the scope should include regarding analysis. The notice will come out in September. There will be some public meetings and policy meetings so people can comment. The Draft EIS is due mid-2016.

9. Financial Report

There were no questions on the Financial Report. Mr. Kramer noted that Ms. Olson had put additional boxes on the report to explain some expenses.

10. Public Comment

Mr. Smith stated \$125,000 was paid for an alternate analysis and then the report came in from WSE. He asked where we are in that thought process. Mr. Kramer explained that the County is responsible for issues that have been raised and will figure out what the next steps will be. Mr. Smith asked if the Outreach Committee will be at the Grays Harbor County Fair. He was informed it would be.

11. Reports

Chehalis – Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated Chehalis Fest is coming up.

Bucoda – Mr. Vanell stated new swings are being dedicated tonight; next week is the Territorial Days picnic.

Montesano – Mr. Estes stated the historic car show is coming up; Kid's fest in the park and a 5k run.

12. Confirm Next Regular Meeting

The next meeting will be on August 20th and it will be a conference call.

The Flood Authority business concluded and the meeting adjourned.