

# Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority

**Meeting 9:00 A.M.**

**Thurston County Public Works**

**July 21, 2016 - Meeting Notes**

**Board Members Present:** Julie Balmelli-Powe, City of Chehalis; Edna Fund, Lewis County Commissioner; Dolores Lee, Town of Pe Ell; Dan Thompson, City of Oakville; Alan Vanell, Town of Bucoda; Jenifer Slem, City of Napavine; Kathi Hoder, City of Aberdeen; Ron Averill, City of Centralia; Dan Wood, City of Montesano; Andrew Kinney, Thurston County

**Board Members Excused:** Frank Chestnut, City of Cosmopolis; Vickie Raines, Grays Harbor County Commissioner

**Others Present:** Scott Severs and Steve Willie, JWMA; Alan Carr, Town of Bucoda; Kathleen Berger, Thurston Conservation District; Tom Clingman, Ecology; David Fleckenstein, Chehalis-Centralia Airport; Trent Loughheed, City of Chehalis; Gloria Rogers, WDFW; Vince Panesko, Panesko Tree Farms; Rick Sangder and Kris Koski, City of Aberdeen; Jim Kramer, Facilitator; Scott Boettcher, Staff to the Flood Authority

## **Handouts/Materials Used:**

- Agenda
- Meeting Notes from June 16, 2016
- Bucoda Main Street Regrade PPT
- 2017-2019 Local Projects Recruitment Document
- Local Projects
- Financial Report
- See [https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias\\_1492/34798/meetings.aspx#July2016](https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias_1492/34798/meetings.aspx#July2016)

## **1. Call to Order**

Commissioner/Vice Chair Fund called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

## **2. Introductions**

Self-introductions were made by all attending.

## **3. Approval of Agenda**

There were no changes or corrections to the agenda and it was approved by consensus.

## **4. Approval of Meeting Notes**

There were no changes or corrections to the June meeting notes and were approved by consensus.

## **5. Continued Discussion of Office of Chehalis Basin**

At the last meeting, Tom Clingman, Ecology, gave an overview of the legislation passed last session creating the Office of Chehalis Basin. Mr. Kramer asked those who attended a meeting last week with Mr. Clingman and Derek Sandison of the Office of Columbia River and summarize what they got out of that discussion.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated the meeting was very informative. His group paralleled the Flood Authority experience in that former groups tried to move ahead with little definite progress. Mr. Averill stated the

only problem he saw was that the Office of Columbia River talks about water rights and those types of projects. It more clearly reflects the role of the Governor's Chehalis Basin Work Groups, with the Work Group concentrating on the overall long-term strategy and the Projects Committee working on small projects. The Office of Chehalis Basin needs to parallel those.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated as the summers get longer and dryer we are looking at a solution that works for everyone.

Ms. Kramer stated the key to the success of the Office of Columbia River is that Mr. Sandison put thousands of miles on his car and talked to people who represent different interests. The concerns he heard he tried to make sure were fully understood. It was a demanding role and a role that is challenging to do. Mr. Sanderson stated one needs to be patient and impatient – know when to let things develop but also know when to put the pressure on. He talked about the need for facilitation and the value of a programmatic EIS that allowed for more formal evaluation of alternatives so that the preferred alternative percolated out of that concept. That office does not have a board but an advisory group that directs work and a larger stake holder group that meets with the advisory group for discussions.

Mr. Clingman stated Columbia River program had a bond issue for millions of dollar when Mr. Sandison started but that is not how things are being done now. That was a great asset with the water investments that he made. He did not operate in the normal course of project lists, going through the legislature, etc.

Mr. Boettcher stated Mr. Sandison's group built a project atlas that had a list of all possible projects in the Basin. Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated he kept a rotation of projects being worked on and other coming up which helped with the legislature knowing that the money was being used.

Mr. Kramer stated the team for the Office of Chehalis Basin needs that type of person. He or she can't get wrapped up in office demands and needs to be out in the community. In some ways he needs to buck the pressure to focus internally when this work is external. Mr. Sandison offered to be an advisor.

Mr. Kramer stated another issue was the overhead coming out of the fund source. He and others met with OFM and Ecology and expressed that concern. They are in sync with the Flood Authority thinking in that there is not a lot of overhead taken out. Mr. Clingman stated he met with WDFW because of their leading role on the habitat side and all are looking to avoid that problem.

Mr. Vanell asked if Mr. Sandison talked about what he considered the toughest issues. Was it money or filtering responsibility of authority? Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated he talked about overcoming struggles. He was able to have people who were ready to work together after his years of working with them.

Mr. Kramer stated he would say the nature and pressure in an institution is one set of things you need to respond to and being creative in pushing the envelope, and not alienating the folks in the institution or jeopardize the funds. Ecology's responsibility is a different role than aggressively pursuing solutions. They have a regulatory role and their people will respond to the different demands. The hiring process will start in the spring of 2017.

Mr. Vanell asked who will be responsible for that process. Mr. Clingman stated it will be Gordon White of Ecology. The core budget leads at OFM have clarified for this next biennium the budget will be worked out through the Work Group process.

#### **6. Bucoda Main Street Regrade Project**

Mr. Boettcher stated this project was to raise the grade of Main Street to let flood water go underneath. It was funded at \$3.1 million and as it got to 30% design the price tag was increasing.

Steve Willie and Scott Severs of JW Morrissette and Associates presented a PowerPoint of the project. They explained that the remaining budget is \$269,534. To prepare for 90% plans would require an additional \$97,000.

Mr. Averill stated that most of the properties along this route will be raised and emergency vehicles will have access. The new price tag is \$8 million which will use virtually all of the project money for one year in the biennium and part of the money for the next year. He was leaning towards the 90% design to see if it might be worth the additional money.

Mr. Wood stated the \$8 million and \$97,000 are different questions. The \$8 million does not need to be spent to get more information. Under a different scenario, what homes are still flooded, how many people are in those homes and what is the value of those properties? If the street is fixed and all of the homes are wiped out, emergency vehicles still need to get through. This doesn't tell what happens to the people and that is how money gets appropriated. If we are going to spend the \$100,000 and not know what happens to the people it is a waste of money.

Mr. Boettcher stated the people story is 1/3 of the town is isolated for several days, so the impetus of the project is to have emergency access. Mr. Kramer stated it is not dissimilar from the Wishkah Road situation. Should we go to 90% engineering? That does not answer Mr. Woods' question. There is opposition to this project and designing it will not get the support of the people.

Mr. Vanell stated there are elderly people in that area who might need emergency help and State law forbids emergency vehicles from going down a flooded street. There was a lot of fear during the 2009 flood and fear escalates when you are not healthy.

Mr. Kramer asked Mr. Vanell what he thought would help the people who were opposing the project. Mr. Vanell stated during the first town meeting there was a lot of skepticism. People were seeing elevation changes and wondered how they would get into their driveway or what it would look like. A better explanation might be better for west side people; they could see their homes would be better off. Further design might help on the east side as well as opportunities to come up with different solutions: a wall or easement that might channel water into a culvert. We don't know if that's possible without further design.

Mr. Kinney stated this is an emergency access solution, not a flood project. You could potentially solve it by deploying shelter on the east side. The west side is not a dike and not considered a dike by FEMA and eventually the water will find a way over. Any engineering to stop water will eventually get beat. Elevating homes and figuring out emergency service to the east side is a better solution. Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated in order to make a decision we need current data.

Mr. Averill stated even with a dam we are not talking about eliminating flooding. Is there a way of protecting those properties? Could a levee be built to take water around, or a bypass channel? WSE said a levee around the city would cause more problems than it would solve. Most homes in the red area of the map have already been raised.

Mr. Wood asked if estimated longevity of the value of the project, along with climate projections, be included in the \$97,000. Mr. Willie stated that was considered. He would take it back to WSE and ask that question.

Mr. Kramer asked if the project should be pursued with the new cost estimate, and should more money be spent than is currently allocated to take to design. He was not hearing this project should be canceled. What other information is needed to decide whether or not to pursue? He suggested moving to request additional information to make a decision and in motivating people who are opposed.

Mr. Vanell agreed. Additional information is needed for another access, emergency access or evacuation that has not been explored. Mayor Carr also agreed.

There was consensus for that recommendation. Mr. Kramer, Mr. Boettcher and Mr. Vanell will work to answer those questions and costs associated with them. If it is ready to go before the next meeting the Executive Committee will make a decision.

Mr. Wood asked, with this scenario during the 2009 flood, would the homes at the lower elevations not have flooded.

#### **7. 2017-2019 Funding – Review and Approve Local Projects Document**

Mr. Boettcher stated he has a document ready to be sent out for approval so projects can be submitted. Some changes included asking the proponent to tell how they are working with regulatory agencies. There have been some challenges with the US Army Corps of Engineers and we don't want projects to get hung up. He also asked the proponents to give some thought to quantification of benefits. Projects have to go through a government entity. Some proposals have come from citizens and it is difficult to get funding for them. Also, provide multiple benefits for projects, such as using a natural system of design near water. This is important with Ecology especially – think of flood control and habitat. Commitments with the Tribes involve a more natural systems of design.

Mr. Boettcher would like to send the document out tomorrow and give people three weeks to respond. Once projects come back to the Flood Authority the Projects Committee and Ecology will sift through them and prioritize them. In September there will be a refined list for direction.

Next steps include distributing the list on Friday, and asking support to reach out to the QIN and Chehalis Tribe for further discussion, timing, sequence, etc. Mr. Averill stated we are pushing early because the legislation has already asked for projects for their budget. We have been working with the Chehalis Tribe through the Work Group and the QIN is taking a lot more interest and the Projects Committee wants them to be in the front end of the project. This biennium's budget will use our process of the Projects Committee and Work Group coming up with separate requirements. Money in that process will go into the governor's budget.

Mr. Vanell asked about the status of farm pads. Mr. Kramer stated the Conservation Commission has met with three districts and there are three farm pads that are to be constructed this biennium that is

part of the \$12 million. They are also expanding chemical storage and elevations of walls to protect lagoons for \$500,000.

Mr. Kramer asked if there was consensus for the project process to be sent out. There was consensus.

### **8. Bucoda Foundation Flood Openings – Status Update and Lessons Learned**

Mr. Boettcher stated for the pilot project in Bucoda there were ten projects and two contractors. One contractor got 9 homes, one contractor got one home. The average cost per parcel was \$8500. One contractor is using engineered vents (9 homes) and the homeowner got an elevation certificate and engineering information to submit for an insurance premium reduction.

Since this was a pilot project, the program was through RCO which created a process: a contract between owner and contractor, set up an inspection, elevation certificate, and finalize an agreement. What we learned was described in a memo that was distributed.

All homes will be done by flood season. Ecology and Office of Chehalis Basin should be lead for new projects. The scale should focus on flood venting throughout the Basin and home elevations should be restricted to Thurston County and Centralia.

Mr. Vanell stated there should not be an elevated home that isn't vented in the future. He asked how we make sure that is in code. Mr. Boettcher stated Ecology can educate jurisdictions that these vents are needed and building officials need to be aware. Mr. Kramer stated a letter could be sent to the Association of General Contractors to get the work out to people building homes and that the government is spending money to retrofit these homes.

Mr. Kramer stated French and Associates and Emil Pierson are working on prioritizing flood venting projects. Mr. Clingman suggested visiting other jurisdictions that might be interested in future implementation. He asked if the most efficient approach would be a circuit writer or a flood plan writing working with FEMA on the CRS to work on a flood ordinance. FEMA money is very rigid and difficult to use but there may be an opportunity if we have a track record of success.

Does the pilot project include the UGA? If it does, then it moves partially into the County.

Mr. Wood asked if there are funds available to do inventories and if someone is actually walking around assessing homes. Mr. Kramer stated there was a structure survey estimating a structure of value and there is a map with structures with first floor elevation below the 100 year flood. There is also repetitive loss information. There is not money in this biennium to spend on elevations.

### **9. Local Projects**

Mr. Boettcher put the master tracking sheet on the screen. Of the total budget of \$12.5 million, \$667,000 has been spent. Centralia as an example has not submitted any bills yet. It choosing to use WSDOT funding first and preserve its local project money for construction (which has not started yet).

There is concern about China Creek which has not received approval from the Corps. The Airport pump is facing challenges in a wetland. There is a design issue (above freeboard) and the geotech report is concerned about the height. There will be increased costs for that. There will be three cost schedules and items can be taken out if there isn't enough funding.

In Elma the Corps says the stabilization project needs to be deeper and that puts that project into next year.

The Montesano River Bank Protection project has scope and design issues. Mr. Boettcher will see where those are and which ones need to be moved forward. The same with the Bucoda regrade project. Sponsors need options and the effect on timeline and costs. He will bring those back.

#### **10. County Fairs**

The Grays Harbor County Fair and the Southwest Washington Fair will be in August. Grays Harbor County Emergency Management does not see the value in manning a booth. Mr. Boettcher asked the members to fill in the rosters to see who is available for both fairs.

This will be Dan Thompson's third year in a booth at the Grays Harbor County Fair (August 10 – 14). Last year we had an event at the table or something to attract people. This year it is important to have outreach because the farther away we are from a large event, people tend to forget. Keep that outreach. He is happy to man the booth and he welcomes help. The Office of Chehalis Basin needs to be talked about, also.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe suggested a chart showing all of the floods and their various impacts.

#### **11. Financial Report**

There were no changes to the financial report. Mr. Averill stated that the Flood Authority is right on track with its budget for this biennium.

#### **12. Public Comment**

Vince Panesko spoke about the proposed dam in Pe Ell. He stated there are three or four major issues that have not gone into the estimated cost of a dam. There have been presentations about costs including fish restoration and he stated the dam will be closer to a billion dollars. Most costs double or triple at this stage of presentation. There is still debate on the fish portion and how effective it will be. There is skepticism about that. There may not be a 50% increase in fish, but up to 50%.

#### **13. Reports**

##### **a. Chair's Report**

There was no Chair report.

##### **b. Member Reports**

*Oakville* – Mr. Thompson reported the flood relief analysis project is 10-15% complete and there is a lot of support for that project.

*Chehalis* – Ms. Balmelli-Powe had handouts for the SWW Fair, August 16 through 21.

##### **c. Correspondence**

There was no correspondence.

##### **d. State Team Report**

There was no State Team report.

#### **14. Confirm Next Regular Meeting**

The next meeting will be a phone meeting on August 18. Both the September and October meetings will be in-person meetings, the September meeting being held in Grays Harbor County. Mr. Kramer reminded everyone to put October 11 and 18 on their calendars for the Governor's Work Group policy workshop and evening public meeting, respectively.

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