

Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority

Meeting 9:00 A.M.

Rochester Organization of Families

10140 US Hwy 12, Rochester

September 18, 2014 - Meeting Notes

Board Members Present: Alan Vanell, Town of Bucoda; Ron Averill, City of Centralia; Kathi Hoder, City of Aberdeen; Edna Fund, Lewis County Commissioner; Ken Estes, City of Montesano; Arnold Haberstroh, City of Chehalis; Lonnie Willie, Town of Pe Ell; Vickie Raines, City of Cosmopolis; Karen Valenzuela, Thurston County Commissioner

Board Members Absent: Wes Cormier, Grays Harbor County Commissioner; Lionel Pinn, City of Napavine; Dan Thompson, City of Oakville

Others Present: Please see sign-in sheet

Handouts/Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Meeting notes from August 21, 2014
- 2015-17 Proposed Project List
- PowerPoint on Floodplain Management Assessment
- September Policy Workshop Information
- Financial Report
- See https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias_1492/34798/meetings_2013-15.aspx#September2014

1. Call to Order

Chair Raines called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

2. Introductions

Self-introductions were made by all attending. Mr. Haberstroh stated this would be his last meeting with the Flood Authority. He stated he has enjoyed being involved and that the Flood Authority is making a lot of headway. He felt comfortable that the Flood Authority would come up with a solution to flooding.

3. Approval of Agenda

There were no corrections to the agenda. Mr. Kramer stated some items would be moved around due to technical difficulties and because Commissioner Fund had to leave early to attend another meeting.

4. Approval of Meeting Notes from August 21, 2014

There were no additions or corrections to the meeting notes; they were approved.

5. Update: Aberdeen Projects; and

6. Change in Budget for Aberdeen Projects

Ms. Hoder and Malcolm Bowie, Aberdeen Public Works Director, explained the need for a north side levee. Mr. Bowie stated everyone in downtown Aberdeen is in the flood plain and over 900 people have flood insurance. In 2012 the Biggert Waters Act was passed to try to make the FEMA insurance program self-sufficient. New insurance rates are going up as much as 600%. Mr. Bowie thought the increase had

been repealed by the affordability act but it only delays the increased rates. The goal of the federal law is to have full-risk rates for everyone.

Aberdeen made the decision to try to get a certified levee on the north side to get rates reduced and perhaps eliminate flood insurance entirely. The next step is to put together a conceptual design and choose an optimal location. Aberdeen City Council has hired a consultant to help with this project. In the meantime an Aberdeen Action Plan has been developed for redevelopment of the downtown and it is consistent with the levee idea. The cost estimate for the levee is estimated to be \$3.5 million. With an aggressive schedule, completion is hoped for by July 2017.

Mr. Averill stated the Project Committee had looked at this project and its concern is getting it done in the next biennium. There will be some fund roll-overs from current projects which would bring the cost down to about \$2.7 million needed in the next biennium. A levee means dealing with Corps of Engineers and they could cause the project to take longer than currently estimated. Mr. Kramer suggested doing a pre-application with the Corps to help speed up the process.

Mr. Kramer stated that the Flood Authority was being asked to support shifting funds from the two current Aberdeen projects to the levee design. He asked if this should be done independent of the Flood Authority's decision on the next biennium project list. Mr. Averill stated yes, because it impacts how the project list is developed.

Mr. Estes stated the other two projects in Aberdeen are important. He asked if those would be kept on the back burner. Mr. Bowie stated those projects upon further analysis would not be very beneficial. Ms. Hoder stated the money is better spent by putting it towards the large project.

Mr. Kramer stated the unspent money from the Market Street project is proposed to go towards the larger project. OFM would like the Flood Authority to weigh in and know that it supports the change before it moves the money. The levee will give economic relief from insurance rates and it lessens flood damage because the mapping will be re-done and changes will be made to the flood plain.

Mr. Kramer, Mr. Boettcher and Mr. Bowie will work on language about the two projects that are being dropped. Mr. Kramer asked if the Flood Authority supported shifting the funds. There were thumbs up all around.

9. Update: Floodplain Management Assessment

Mr. Kramer moved this topic up in the agenda to allow Commissioner Fund to participate. He explained that the Flood Authority approved a scope of work for French and Associates to do an assessment of floodplain management and looking at the rules and administration focused on new development by each of the jurisdictions. This fits with the broader package of the Governor's work group and the long-term strategy of reducing flooding and restoring habitat in the Basin.

Jerry Louthain, HDR, presented a PowerPoint on Floodplain Management Assessment. The project timetable: Start in March, 2014, final reports and technical assistance in October, 2014. There have been community visits, community reports, repetitive loss reports, a DRS report and basin-wide report. All of these reports, with the exception of community reports, are available to anyone.

Some highlights from the PowerPoint include:

Floodplain Mapping: Most communities have older maps from 1980. The recommendation is to produce new maps using updated data and 2007 as the flood of record. Mr. Averill explained that FEMA is not making a decision on their new maps because the new maps did not take into consideration any levees or dikes that did not meet the 100 year flood specifications.

Floodplain Development: The area of floodplain in each jurisdiction varies from 5 – 75%.
Recommendations: Keep open areas as open space; add criteria to plans and zoning ordinances; set effective regulations for standards in building in the floodplain.

Basic NFIP Standards: All development [in the floodplain] needs a permit; building cannot obstruct flow; new buildings protected to BFE; substantially damaged buildings need to be brought up to current code.

Possible Higher Standards: freeboard; critical facilities protection; cumulative substantial damage; floodwater storage lost to filling must be compensated; storage of hazard materials.

Recommendation: Flood Authority to meet with all communities to go over appropriate standards; develop ordinance language. Communities consider higher standards, bring ordinances to NFIP requirements; get all regulations to be consistent.

Administrative Regulations: Staff does need floodplain management training; elevation certificates are needed. (Please see the PowerPoint for the complete list https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1492/images/FPMgt%20Project%20Summary.pdf.)

Repetitive Loss: There are 55 repetitive flood loss areas in the Basin. 90% are subject to overbank flooding by a large river or creek. There are approximately 1770 buildings, mostly single family homes.

Recommendations for Communities: Use all tools: regulations, flood control, retrofitting, public information.

Recommendations to Flood Authority: Flood Authority has \$1.5 million to address flooding issues. (Ideas for this are included in PowerPoint).

CRS Report (Community Rating System)

Mr. Luthain explained the CRS program. The better a community does above FEMA minimums the greater the points.

Recommendations to Flood Authority: Meet with local officials; prepare model materials that can receive credits, help common or coordinated efforts.

Recommendations to Communities: Learn more about CRS; consider costs

Status of Floodplain Management:

- Improvements are needed
- Different levels of map quality
- Different regulatory standards
- 50% need a revision to meet federal or state regulatory standards
- 50% have problems with administration

- All shortcomings can be fixed

Improving Standards:

- Train staff
- Provide templates, modes
- Implement cooperative efforts
- Public Information
- Reduce Repetitive Losses
- Provide for on-call Assistance
- Use Flood Authority funds and the CRS to support these efforts

Mr. Louthain asked for questions.

Mr. Averill stated that raising homes has been slow since the floods in 2007 and 2009. The last capital budget allowed \$1.5 million and very little was used. In the current proposal there have been only three elevation requests. The cost is well under what the legislature provided and the people need to be made aware of this. Raising homes is not getting a lot of attention because the FEMA process is very difficult. Money from the state without the problems might get more people interested.

Mr. Kramer stated there is \$1.5 million that has not been spent and might be utilized. The original plan was not to spend the \$1.5M until the study by French and Associates was completed. Now that the study is nearly complete, he will work with French and Associates and with staff to develop a recommendation for the Flood Authority.

Mr. Kramer stated there are three items from the work by French and Associates for Flood Authority consideration: 1) The data being used is very old. 2) The question about how much more development could occur in the floodplain is uncertain at this time. All three counties have low density in the flood plain. If a UGA includes a floodplain it cannot keep a low density. 3) Administration issues: It is a cumbersome set of regulations and small jurisdictions don't have sufficient staff. There is a need for the ability to call on technical assistance, either from another jurisdiction or an independent.

Commissioner Valenzuela stated that according to the Earth Economics report floodplains do a good job in protecting us from a flood. There are economic benefits to floodplains. The French and Associates Report was not scoped to address that issue.

Mr. Vanell asked when elevating property becomes gifting if it is an individual's home. Mr. Kramer stated that the Department of Ecology and FEMA have evaluated this issue and determined it is not a gift of public funds.

Mr. Averill stated that the GMA allows growth in the UGA. Regarding low density, there is a need to look at legislation to keep green space.

Mr. Estes asked if an on-call person would be a person within the Flood Authority. Mr. Kramer stated that option would be considered. Staff will come back with more options at the next meeting or the one in November.

7. Change in Budget for Farm Pads

The Conservation Commission has not spent \$38,000 from its 1st of two contracts. OFM would like to move that money to its present contract (2nd contract) and close the 1st contract for purposes of administrative efficiency and housekeeping. There were thumbs up for that suggestion.

8. Update: Small Project list for Next State Biennium

Mr. Boettcher distributed a list of small projects and how they are categorized so far. The Project Committee divided them into 5 categories, or “buckets.” There are ten projects that are flood hazard reduction projects and those went into Bucket A. Bucket B are elevations or retrofitting. Bucket E are cross-over projects with DOT. Bucket C include projects with significant fish passage or habitat. Bucket D include projects that are maintenance-oriented and not capital budget projects. There is an F Bucket – projects that are out there but have not come in as a request yet.

Mr. Boettcher stated the Project Committee is asking for endorsement on the bucket categories and he will work on refining the costs on some and finalizing the list at the October meeting to transmit to the Governor’s work group.

Mr. Haberstroh asked if the “E” projects for the airport levee and the Dillenbaugh Creek be put into the A bucket. Mr. Kramer stated the DOT does not want to be lead on the Dillenbaugh project but they might help pay for it. There were thumbs up for this request.

Mr. Boettcher explained the decision for the A Bucket. The first three A projects on the list all made donations to other projects. The Flood Authority acknowledged that projects could elevate higher because they made donations and that they could be moved to the top of the list. If A Bucket is approved Mr. Boettcher will work at getting better cost estimates and find out which ones can be done by 2017. There were thumbs up for this request.

B Bucket: Mr. Boettcher recommended that he work with Mr. Louthain and French and Associates and to utilize \$1.5 million remaining in 2013-15 funds. Mr. Averill stated that alot could be done in the current appropriation. Mr. Kramer suggested developing a recommendation for next flood authority meeting for using available funds to respond to elevation and retrofit events that may come up. There were thumbs up for that recommendation.

C Bucket: There is \$4.3 million for habitat-oriented projects. Mr. Boettcher recommended forwarding these to the Governor’s work group. There were thumbs up for that recommendation.

D Bucket: These are mostly road maintenance projects and Mr. Boettcher recommended turning them back to Grays Harbor County. There were thumbs up.

E Bucket: Mr. Boettcher stated these projects will go to the Governor’s work group, without Dillenbaugh Creek and the airport levee. There will be discussion with DOT about Alternative 1. Mr. Vanell asked that all projects be shown to DOT so they are aware of them. Bucket E was approved to go to the Governor’s work group.

F Bucket: Mr. Boettcher stated there has been a lot of discussion about projects and it was clear that they needed to be submitted on the new form. Several projects did not come in, including the Boistfort Water District and the Kirkland Road project. He thought there should be one more effort to get new projects submitted. The Flood Authority agreed to that suggestion.

Mr. Boettcher stated he and the Projects Committee would get the list of Bucket A projects prioritized. The list will be available at the October meeting.

Mr. Kramer added to the agenda a discussion about the possible condemnation of properties on the Wishkah Rd. He would like the Grays Harbor Commissioners to attend a Flood Authority meeting and give their perspective before condemnation.

Frank Kersch stated there is support from 300 residents, mayors and the fire department. He thinks the county is doing the right thing.

Chair Raines stated there is concern by the public at large that if the county can take something via eminent domain what can be done in the future. She would like the Commissioners to give an update and how they plan to move forward before they start the eminent domain process.

Commissioner Valenzuela asked what could be gained by the Commissioners talking to the Flood Authority. Mr. Kramer stated the Flood Authority showed the Legislature that it can get projects on the ground. We would like to demonstrate progress and use these projects as examples for the broader basin. He understands this project is generating significant concern in the community which would mean diminishing support. He is not suggesting that condemnation is never used but that there is a plan to deal with the controversy that doesn't diminish other projects. He will send a communication to the Grays Harbor Commissioners asking them to hold off on condemnation until they can talk over their strategies with the Flood Authority. There were thumbs up for this suggestion.

10. Update: Op-ed for Public Meetings

Mr. Boettcher stated at the last meeting there was discussion about op eds to encourage better attendance at the October public meetings. He read the draft statement. Mr. Haberstroh suggested using a title that would grab attention.

The op-ed piece was approved.

11. Update: September 25-26 Policy Workshop

Mr. Kramer stated the workshop agenda was included in the packet that was emailed. He stressed that these meetings are important for Flood Authority members and others to attend. The workshops are to provide everyone's perspective to the Governor's work group and present opinions. They will be held at the Great Wolf Lodge starting at 8:30 each day.

Mr. Averill stated if you are not a member you must pay \$95. He asked if Mr. Boettcher could talk to Dave Curtis about waiving the fee.

12. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

13. Reports

The Chair recommended suspending member reports.

14. Financial Report

Ms. Napier summarized the report, stating that expenses for the last period were \$70,240.06, covering salaries, wages and services. She asked for questions; there were none.

15. Meeting Conclusions

Mr. Kramer stated the Flood Authority learned of the idea for a north bank levee in Aberdeen and supported that to move it to design. It heard conclusions regarding floodplain management, damage prevention and the use of old data and future development in floodplains; it approved the change in funding for farm pads and developed next steps for finalizing the small projects list for the next meeting.

16. Confirm Next Regular Meeting, Topics and Locations

The next meeting will be a telephone meeting on October 16. The final list of small projects will be ready for review and Mr. Kramer will send a request to the Grays Harbor County Commissioners to discuss condemnation. In November the Flood Authority will meet in Grays Harbor County. There is a conflict with the WSAC conference and the Board agreed to meet on November 13 in Montesano. Mr. Estes hoped there would be time for a quick tour of the river.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 12:01 p.m.