

New Castle City Flood Resiliency Committee Meeting
Minutes
November 21, 2023 – 7:00 p.m.
1 Municipal Boulevard, New Castle, DE

Members Present: Alice Riehl, Chair
Gail Seitz
Tish Gallagher
Fred Gallagher
Timothy Moore
Richard Pennell
Sandra Taylor

Absent: Michael Marinelli

Also Present: Council President Suzanne Souder

Ms. Riehl called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll call followed and a quorum to conduct business was declared.

Election of Chair

Ms. Riehl asked for nominations to be appointed as Chair of the Flood Resiliency Committee. She added that if there were no nominations for chair she would be willing to serve another year. There being no nominations, the Committee approved Ms. Riehl as Chair for the upcoming year.

Reappointments

In response to a question from Ms. Riehl, Mr. Pennell stated that he is not seeking reappointment to the Flood Resiliency Committee when his term expires.

There were no recommendations for anyone to fill the open seat.

Minutes

A motion to approve the September 19, 2023 minutes as presented was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

Update on NRCS

Ms. Riehl stated that she contacted Ms. Baldwin, and Ms. Baldwin had no updates for the Committee.

Discussion of Resolution Transitioning the Task Force to a Standing Committee

Ms. Riehl reviewed the goals of the Committee stated in Resolution 2023-32.

Relative to Goals 4 and 5, Ms. Riehl reviewed several articles.

- A New York Times article focused on Hoboken, New Jersey, and the construction of underground cisterns in a number of city parks and open areas to collect storm water,

which has reduced street flooding in the city from days to hours. Ms. Riehl suggested that several members of the Committee travel to Hoboken to meet with officials and gather more information about the cisterns. After discussion, it was agreed that Ms. Riehl will arrange a meeting with officials in Hoboken after the first of the year.

- A CNN article spoke about 100-year floods and that according to a 2023 study by First Street Foundation coastal areas in particular are at a much higher risk than estimated by NOAA's Atlas 14 precipitation data. According to the First State Foundation data New Castle is in area of the country where a 1-in-100-year storm is likely to occur every 10 years or less.

Ms. Riehl opined that the situation is so fluid and changing for the worse, that it is important to consider what the city will look like in 2050.

Ms. Seitz suggested that Kevin Donnelly of the New Castle Conservation District be invited to a future meeting. Ms. Riehl will reach out to have Mr. Donnelly attend the next quarterly Committee meeting.

During discussion, Council President Souder noted that it was agreed to clear out the ditches along Route 9, but there were concerns about clearing out the ditches further back, including permission from DNREC, the cost, and that the ditches would probably fill in quickly.

Relative to Goals 6 and 8, Ms. Riehl distributed a Statewide Mitigation Update that highlighted Federal funding that is currently available for mitigation plans, technical assistance, project scoping/feasibility studies, partnership development, enhancing floodplain management, building flood-related capabilities, community resilience to flooding, and home/ public building elevations.

Ms. Gallagher suggested that the community be apprised of the fact that the City does not have the NRCS funding yet, nor does it know exactly how much money will be involved.

Next Meeting

The Committee is tasked to meet quarterly and after discussion it was agreed to schedule the next Committee meeting in February or March.

Miscellaneous

Ms. Seitz noted that Mr. Pennell had researched updating the City website to include more information on the Flood Resiliency Committee and the NRCS. Ms. Riehl stated her understanding that nothing has been done to update the City website yet. Ms. Seitz will look into having the website updated.

Ms. Riehl thanked Mr. Pennell for his participation with the Committee.

Public Comment

Phil Gross – 1301 13th Street

Mr. Gross concurred with updating the community of potential flooding, opining that there are a number of citizens who think the project will commence shortly. He added that he has spoken with representatives of various State agencies and it could be 5-7 years before anything is begun. He suggested that the Committee do a Press Release of the facts and the timeline before the next quarterly meeting.

Mr. Gross added that he confirmed that once the Committee approves the project and “the shovel is in the ground” it is “out of our hands” and the City will no longer have any say in the project. Ms. Riehl refuted that statement, noting that the City can stop the project at any time.

Mr. Gross stated that he attended a DNREC meeting recently, and that DNREC is inconsistent as to the truth regarding the environment and the water system. He urged the Committee ensure the project is consistent with Delaware Code.

There being no further business to discuss, Ms. Riehl called for a motion to adjourn.

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded and unanimously carried, and the meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen R. Weirich
City Stenographer