



The Town of Fenwick Island

800 Coastal Highway, Fenwick Island, DE 19944-4409

302-539-3011 ~ 302-539-1305 fax

www.fenwickisland.delaware.gov

INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE MEETING

February 13, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

Town Hall

Minutes

Members Present: Richard Benn (Zoom), Jack Armstrong (Zoom), Tim Bergin (Zoom), Ed Bishop (Zoom), Larry Bortner (Zoom), Susan Brennan (Zoom), Tim Leahy (Zoom), Jon Miller (Zoom), George Murphy (Zoom), Jay Ryan (Zoom), Nuwan Seneviratne (Zoom), Geri Verlaque (Zoom)

Others Present: Lori Dabbondanza, Natalie Magdeburger (Zoom), Bill Rymer (Zoom), Ann Riley (Zoom), Josh Stuhler, Pat Schuchman, Kevin Zipay

Flag salute and call to order

The meeting was called to order by chair, Richard Benn, at 10 a.m.

1. Approval of prior minutes

The minutes from the January 9, 2024, meeting were approved as amended on a T. Bergin/T. Leahy motion.

MOTION passed unanimously.

2. Discussion on proposals presented to working group

Ed Bishop reported that they have not yet selected a firm yet, however they are leaning towards selecting multiple firms to partner together, with one being the lead on the project. He added that they have learned a lot during the interview process.

It was noted that BRIC grant funds will not be reimbursed if the work is performed prior to the grant being awarded. With the approval of Council, they would like to ask the engineering firms to perform some studies in advance of the grant. Ed Bishop also recommended that the committee look into seeking volunteers to perform some needed research in advance of the grant announcement. Research and citizen input would likely consist of a mechanism to allow citizens to upload their stormwater and flooding images to an online database that would assist with cataloguing and documenting specific areas and issues regarding flooding. He noted that the engineering firms would then be able to use that information going forward to build their baseline and recommend alternative

solutions. Additionally, he added that solutions across town may be different depending on the location, flooding, etc.

Tim Leahy reported that the town's application has been submitted to DEMA and we are progressing through the process with them. DEMA has responded with several questions and requests for information that we have been able to provide in a timely manner.

Tim Bergin reminded members to not to mention engineering firms by name publicly. He noted that their work group feels good about the progress they've made so far, and they hope everyone will be happy at the end of the process.

Ed Bishop added that all the engineering firms have departments dedicated to finding money to complete these projects and shared that our goal is to get the funding sooner rather than later.

There were questions about what data we need to gather, and whether we need to be more systematic with that data during a rain event. It was noted that the state of DE maintains a website that allows photo uploads for this purpose. Ed Bishop will research where the site is and share the information with the committee. It may be beneficial to share that information with resident's town wide.

3. Discussion on Town Website Resiliency and Flood Information page content

Richard Benn asked if there is someone that is willing to review the content on the town's resiliency and flood information website. Tim Leahy volunteered to assist with the update. He will reach out to Lori to schedule a date.

4. Discussion on possible short-term solutions for nuisance flooding

Richard Benn noted that [HESCO](#) flood barrier boxes may be a short-term option for nuisance flooding. He asked Josh Stuhler from our Public Works department to discuss them further. Josh shared that the HESCO boxes could assist with mitigation of some high-water flooding. Discussion followed. Richard Benn stated that he would like to request a quote from them specifically to implement a short-term solution to flooding on Schulz St. A question was raised asking if sandbags would be a better, more cost-efficient option. There was discussion about working with the owner of the vacant lot on Schultz to see if we can come up with a solution together. Pat Schuchman noted that the bulkhead in that area is very low, but she agreed to reach out to the owner in reference to our town ordinance that refers to failing bulkhead and ask her about raising her bulkhead for the protection of the street. However, Pat noted that she is not sure if this instance would meet that criterion for ordinance enforcement. The committee was reminded that the vacant lot is a buildable lot. Richard Benn noted that a living shoreline could help with our nuisance flooding in that area and stressed that we need a

comprehensive plan to address this issue town wide. Discussion followed. Tim Bergin shared his concern about using town money to remedy this issue and noted that it may set a precedent.

Nuvan shared that during high water and flood events in that particular area, water typically comes up through the drains first, so he's not sure raising the bulkhead in that area will help with the nuisance flooding. He shared video that he captured from his security system located on N. Schulz Rd., facing east, that clearly shows the water rising in the street prior to any breach of water over the bulkhead. Josh Stuhler will check what may be causing the issue and report back to Mike Locke with information to share with the committee. Natalie suggested when we partner with people/firms pre-grant, we should focus our efforts on our three critical areas in town in terms of what can be done. Richard Benn asked the committee for ideas to deal with this issue in the short term. Nuvan noted that sandbags may be a low-cost option to try and see if it helps. Ed Bishop added that the 2024 plan could benefit from Nuvan's videos. Perhaps something that we can put together with a narrative and share with our legislative leaders when considering funding options. The committee agreed that we should bring a qualified engineer to look at that one area and offer suggestions. Richard Benn added that we need a well-engineered solution for this problem, however, it may be premature to address this issue at this time. Ed Bishop noted that there are extensive grants available to address flood issues for private property owners. Richard raised the question about repaving the road and whether it makes sense to have them raise the road at that time. Ed Bishop noted that he'd prefer to wait on the repaving, if possible, to see if we can get this issue resolved first. Natalie would like to have the valve on Dagsboro looked at for possible malfunction before we have any further discussion about repaving or raising the road.

Richard Benn reminded meeting attendees that we won't know if we have been awarded the grant for this project until next fall. Tim Bergin asked if their workgroup could look into the specific issue on N. Schulz further and recommend a firm to come in and look at some short-term options until we're able get the grant project underway. Ed Bishop suggested that perhaps we use some of the money that was earmarked for paving this year and redirect it to a short-term stormwater management solution.

After discussion a motion was made to bring in an engineering firm to study the flooding on N. Schulz Rd. and report back on short-term remediation options. **Motion** made by Geri Verlaque. Seconded by Tim Bergin. Discussion followed. Documentation of flooding events will be key to making our point and requesting grant funding in the future. Having video of the flooding progression as it happens would be helpful to determine how each problem area in town floods.

MOTION passed unanimously.

5. Public Participation
None

6. New Business
Jon Miller noted that the working group working with C&O on the lot elevation issue may need to be worked into the scope of the study and get the engineering firms to weigh in. Ed Bishop added that changes to code should ultimately be to improve the resilience of the town. Jon Miller shared that he is getting varying feedback from different residents, some for and some against raising the lot elevation. Ann Riley shared that we need expert advice on the issue. We want to make sure raising one lot but not another does not create a flood issue for neighboring houses that may not have raised their lots.

7. Old Business
None

8. Adjournment
Motion to adjourn G. Verlaque/E. Bishop.