

MINUTES

Flood Advisory Committee - Downingtown Borough

December 14, 2023

The Flood Advisory Committee for Downingtown Borough met in a regular session on December 14, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. at the Municipal Government Center, 4 W. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown, PA. Board Members present: Cori Trice, Max Howard, Jack Moyer, Phil Dague, Alex Rakoff, Dan Castaldi, and Matt Bush.

Approve August, September, October, and November's Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve November's meeting minutes, committee member Phil Dague made the motion, committee member Dan Castaldi seconded, motion carried unanimously. Action regarding previous months' meeting minutes was deferred.

Deferred Business

Emergency Response Plan Status Check – Borough Emergency Management Coordinator Mark Force is currently working on the plan and updates will be provided at future meetings as available. Max Howard asked about the due date for the plan and Phil Dague will investigate.

PEMA Buy Out Program Update – Matt Bush gave an update regarding the status of the program and noted that the grant has been approved but we are waiting on funds to be available; coordination and permitting are currently ongoing with expected settlement dates of approximately first quarter of 2024 and demolition during the summer of 2024.

New Business

Update on Downingtown Strong and Downingtown Resiliency Fund – Barry Cassidy gave an update on the Downingtown Resiliency Fund. Barry mentioned that the website for the group is up and their first meeting is planned for March and would like the Downingtown Flood Advisory Committee to be represented. Phil Dague gave an update on Downingtown Strong including the group pursuing 501(c)(3) status and their next meeting being in January. The group will work with the Downingtown Resiliency Fund to implement some of their efforts and there is a memorandum of understanding in between the two groups.

Grant Funding Update – Matt Bush stated that the Borough filed an application for a Pennsylvania Local Share Account Statewide grant for the installation of a private stream gauge and camera on the East Branch of the Brandywine Creek near Borough Hall.

Discuss Gannett Fleming Reports of Mill Race with Seung Ah Byun, PhD, PE, Chester County Water Resources Authority Executive Director and Nathan Walker, AICP, Senior Water Resources Planner, Gannett Fleming – Nathan Walker from Gannett Fleming gave the Committee some background on the Technical Memorandums from 2013 and 2015 and also an update on some history of the mill race. Seung Ah gave a background on the dam removal and noted that it was removed for public safety and also environmental concerns such as fish passage. She also noted that the mill race wasn't in use at the time of the dam removal and that there were issues with the functioning of the dam and that low head dams in general are not used for flood mitigation. Nathan mentioned that the dam was likely used for the paper mill operations and not for any type of flood mitigation. Cori Trice mentioned that the Committee should focus on looking forward and focusing on the future. Dan Castaldi talked about historic preservation of the old raceways within the Borough and potentially using them for flood mitigation. Sarah Brown from East Brandywine Township presented history of the mill race dating back from 1716 to the present. The Committee discussed the potential of looking into funding for a Downingtown specific flood study that would include investigation utilizing the old millraces. Committee member Dan Castaldi made a motion for the Committee to investigate funding for this study, committee member Alex Rakoff seconded, and the motion carried unanimously. Committee Chairperson Cori Trice will setup a meeting with Ellen Kohler from the Water Center at the University of Pennsylvania, Alex Rakoff, Matt Bush, and Seung Ah Byun.

Review committee-led and citizen-led projects –

- i. Heavy duty stream clean-up before Fall storms and in early Spring
 - a. Data collection methods – no update but there was discussion regarding setting something up later in the spring.
- ii. Reverse 911 program to the homes in the 100 year and 500 year known flood zones – update on list of properties in these zones – no update at this time but Phil Dague has said he will follow up with Emergency Management Coordinator Mark Force.
- iii. Finish and publish the web page we have discussed – defer to next month’s meeting.
- iv. Set up the non-USGS monitoring stations and figure out how to get that information to residents – no update at this time, currently seeking funding to implement.

Citizens to be Heard

Dawn McMichael of 310 Mary Street asked about the Brandywine Flood Study and why there wasn’t more notification by the Borough for the special meeting for the Brandywine Flood Study that was held at Borough Hall, specifically on the Borough website. Phil Dague said he would look into the notification process by the Borough.

For the Good of the Order

Alex Rakoff mentioned that the next Borough Council meeting is at 7:00 p.m on January 2, 2024.

Adjournment

Committee vice chairperson Max Howard made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 p.m., committee member Alex Rakoff seconded; motion carried unanimously.