

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Executive Office of Mayor Muriel Bowser



Office of the City Administrator

TO: Designated Agency Directors – Voting Task Force Members

FROM: Kevin Donahue, City Administrator

DATE: September 23, 2021

SUBJECT: Establishing a Flood Task Force for the District of Columbia

Dear Directors,

The Office of City Administrator (“OCA”) is establishing a Flood Task Force (“Task Force”) for the District of Columbia and I have identified your agency as critical to help shape and implement the important work of the Task Force. To that end, please prepare to participate as a voting member of the Task Force. Below, I have outlined the purpose, scope, and membership of the Task Force. Also attached is a background document providing additional information on the need for a Task Force, progress on related topics to date, and ideas for the Task Force to consider. Agency Directors will be the primary point of contact for the Task Force, though a Director may delegate a subject matter expert from his or her agency to attend, participate, and vote for them on the Task Force. **If you choose to do this, please confirm your delegate by October 1, 2021, by emailing Nick Bonard at Nicholas.Bonard@dc.gov.**

Purpose:

Heavy rains on September 10, 2020, caused flooding¹ in many neighborhoods in the District and affected hundreds of residents. It was the most recent example of the extreme wet weather events that have resulted in interior flooding and sewer-line backups in the District. Flood events and water damage will be more frequent and severe in the future due to climate change, and most of the areas in the District that are known to be at risk of flooding are inhabited by residents that are vulnerable and economically disadvantaged. The District needs to identify policies and projects that can adequately inform its residents about flood readiness while equitably protecting its residents and economy from the damage that floods can cause.

Although various agencies have analyzed flood risk and identified a range of potential actions the District might take to mitigate it, there is not yet a District-wide comprehensive plan for prioritizing, funding, and implementing such actions, identifying which agency or party is

¹ Here, the term “flooding” includes interior flooding and sewer backups.



responsible for implementing them. Creating such a plan will require the coordination of many different executive and independent agencies, as well as outside stakeholder groups. A Flood Task Force is needed to ensure that this coordination takes place, to develop a comprehensive, equitable action plan to address flood risk, and to educate and engage communities on issues of flood risk.

Administration:

The Task Force will report to the Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure (DMOI), who will also serve as a voting member, and be jointly co-chaired by the Director of the Department of Energy and Environment (“DOEE”) and the General Manager of the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (“DC Water”), or their designees. The Task Force will operate according to the guidelines below.

Membership and Procedure

The Task Force shall comprise the following thirteen (13) voting members, or their designees:

1. Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure;
2. General Manager of the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority;
3. Director of the Department of Energy and Environment;
4. Director of the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency;
5. Director of the District Department of Transportation;
6. Director of the Office of Planning;
7. Commissioner of the Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking;
8. Director of the Office of Risk Management;
9. Director of the Department of General Services;
10. Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation;
11. Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development;
12. Director of the Department of Public Works; and
13. Director of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs.

The Task Force shall consult with the following eleven (11) nonvoting consulting members, or their designees:

1. Director of the Office of Racial Equity
2. Director of the Mayor’s Office of Community Relations and Services;
3. Director of the District of Columbia Housing Authority
4. People’s Counsel of the Office of the People’s Counsel;
5. Chair of the Commission on Climate Change and Resiliency;
6. A member of the Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington;
7. A member of the District of Columbia Building Industry Association;
8. A representative of the Federal City Council;
9. A representative from National Park Service National Capital Region;
10. A representative from Federal Emergency Management Agency Region III; and



11. A representative from United States Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District.

The Task Force shall meet at the joint call of the co-chairpersons. A majority of the voting members of the Task Force shall constitute a quorum for official action by the Task Force.

Functions

The Task Force shall identify equitable ways to reduce the risk of water damage from coastal, interior, riverine, and sewer back up floods in the District, as well as ways to reduce financial impacts of flooding on low- and fixed-income homeowners. In considering potential actions, the Task Force shall prioritize the protection of vulnerable populations, maintenance of the District's affordable housing stock, increasing the District's housing supply in a safe and resilient manner, supporting ongoing economic development, and mitigating disparities in real estate access and equity.

Within 12 months of the first meeting of the Task Force, the Task Force shall produce a report that includes an action plan for each of the following categories:

1. Flood and sewer line backup insurance;
2. Repairing flood damage in low-income homes and neighborhoods;
3. Flood proofing of individual homes and facilities;
4. Sewer line backups and backwater valve installation;
5. Flood mitigation infrastructure projects;
6. Regulations, legislation, compliance, and permitting;
7. Mapping and modeling;
8. Flood mitigation planning and coordination;
9. Flood emergency planning, response, and recovery; and
10. Any other category identified by the Task Force.

For each category in the preceding paragraph, the Task Force shall:

1. Identify at least one action to implement;
2. Assign a lead agency and a point of contact within the lead agency for oversight of implementation of each action;
3. Estimate costs and propose funding strategies for each action, taking into account equity, efficiency, practicability and timing, as well as the District's debt cap and capital spending plan;
4. Prepare a proposed timeline for implementation of each action; and
5. Prioritize actions within and for vulnerable communities.

The final report shall constitute a single, integrated action plan that combines the action plans for each of the categories identified above. After the final report is completed, the Task Force shall continue to meet at least annually to track progress on the action plans and discuss budgeting for Task Force priorities that require funding, until the Task Force determines that the action plans have been fully or substantially implemented.



DOEE and DC Water will provide administrative and technical support to the Task Force. The Task Force may establish such subgroups, consisting of members or nonmembers, as it deems necessary to carry out the purposes of the Task Force and further a participatory process and outreach on proposed actions.

I appreciate the cooperation of all Task Force members in conducting this vital work and I look forward to interim status updates and the final report. I hope it will serve Mayor Bowser and future administrations as a guide to reducing flooding and flood damage in the District.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K-D', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kevin Donahue
City Administrator

