

DC Flood Task Force Meeting Minutes



**DC Flood Task Force
Meeting Minutes
January 19, 2021
Virtual WebEx Meeting
2:00 – 4:00 pm**

Meeting began at 2:03 pm with the following members, agencies, and support staff in attendance.

VM = Voting Member

Attending Voting Members and Support Staff

Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure (DMOI)

1. Alan Propp
2. Jonathan Rogers

District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (DC Water)

1. David Gadis | Co-Chair, and VM
2. Lisa Barton
3. Salil Kharkar
4. John Lisle
5. Getachew Melsew
6. Barbara Mitchell
7. Apera Nwora
8. Matt Ries
9. Kirsten Bowden Williams

District of Columbia Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE)

1. Tommy Wells | Co-Chair, and VM
2. Nicholas Bonard
3. Lily Cheng
4. Martin Koch
5. Joshua Schnitzlein
6. Jeffrey Seltzer
7. Victor Ukpolo
8. Meredith Upchurch

District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA)

1. Vermechia Alsop
2. Wes Leary
3. Carolyn Mejia

District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT)

1. Ravi Ganvir (VM)
2. EJ Simie

District of Columbia Office of Planning (OP)

1. Stephen Gyor (VM)
2. Andree Entezari
3. Andrea Limauro
4. Elisa Vitale

District of Columbia Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking (DISB)

1. Karima Woods (VM)
2. Philip Barlow
3. Philip Edmonds
4. Patrice Garnette
5. Angela King

District of Columbia Office of Risk Management (ORM)

1. Jed Ross (VM)
2. Jane Waters

District of Columbia Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)

1. Delano Hunter (VM)
2. Brent Sisco

District of Columbia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

1. Richard Livingstone (VM)

District of Columbia Department of Public Works (DPW)

1. Mike Carter
2. Andrew Gerst
3. Camille Glover

District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA)

1. Christopher Bailey (VM)

Attending Consulting Members and Support Staff

District of Columbia Mayor's Office of Community Relations and Services (MOCRS)/Executive Office of the Mayor (EOM)

1. Robert Preston

District of Columbia Office of the People's Counsel (OPC)

1. Stephen Dudek
2. Yohannes Mariam
3. Karen Sistrunk
4. Grace Soderberg

District of Columbia Commission on Climate Change and Resiliency (DC CCR)

1. Uwe Brandes
2. Sandra Knight

National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)

1. Julia Koster

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG)

1. Steve Bieber
2. Katie Dyer

Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington (AOBA)

1. Glenn Hugo
2. Eric Jones

District of Columbia Building Industry Association (DCBIA)

1. Cell Bernardino
2. Erika Wadlington

Federal City Council (FCC)

1. Lindsay Brugger

Federal Emergency Management Agency Region III (FEMA RIII)

1. Maggie Dunn

United States Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District (USACE)

1. Stacey Underwood

Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO)

1. James Pittman

Washington Gas

1. Manny Geraldo

Facilitation Team - Monash Advisory Group

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| 1. Monte Monash | 3. Rachel Kendrick | 5. Nick Hall |
| 2. Adria Anderson | 4. Kimberly Manning | |

Other Attendees

1. Brian E. McLaughlin
2. David Sharon
3. Eli Russ

There were 4 unidentified call-in participants.

2: 03 pm | Welcome and Opening Remarks

Facilitator Monte Monash welcomed everyone to the second Full Flood Task Force Meeting. She shared a summary of the Task Force meeting, the Task Force’s timeline and scheduled meeting dates, why the Task Force was commissioned and by who, and lastly, gave an overview of the goals for January’s Task Force Meeting.

Meeting goals were listed as follows:

- Report out action team progress to the full Task Force.
- Review action ideas in the context of “Effort - Benefit” evaluations.
- Gain feedback on action ideas, evaluations, and priorities.
- Discuss plan for public listening sessions.

CEO David Gadis affirmed that DC Water is dedicated to resiliency and that resiliency is an imperative listed in DC Water’s new strategic plan. Equity, sustainability, reliability, health, safety, and wellness are all key priorities for DC Water. The Task Force is just one tool in DC Water’s ‘toolbox’ for future preparedness. DC Water aims to collaborate with other agencies to achieve resiliency goals. CEO Gadis also noted that several attendees at the US Conference of Mayors reported flooding problems and were interested in the Task Force as a national model.

Director Tommy Wells of DOEE noted that flood events will continue to occur and that flooding affects the District’s bond rating, business climate, comfort of residents, public transportation, and other priorities. He expressed hope that climate adaptation measures will be adopted promptly even before the conclusion of the Task Force process. He plans to share recommendations with the City Administrator to facilitate funding.

Nick provided an overview of the Task Force structure, including the Governance and Coordination Action Team and the Residential Resilience Action Team. For instance, Action Category 3 (“Floodproofing Homes”) is located in the Residential Resilience Action Team and is led by DOEE. The Action Teams have begun to categorize ideas and have made a draft attempt at scoring based on level of benefit and level of effort. The Green/Yellow/Red categories focus on return on investment for each action. For instance, installing GFCI electrical outlets would require less effort than a levee but would result in a more limited benefit. This can be categorized by a benefit-effort matrix that divides action ideas into “Win-Wins,” “Big Bets,” “Quick Wins,” and “Spinning Wheels.” Salil highlighted the benefit-effort matrix and indicated that several of the ideas are interlinked.

RESIDENTIAL RESILIENCE ACTION TEAMS

Category 1: Flood and Sewer Line Backup Insurance | Lead Agency - DISB

- Philip Barlow addressed six key ideas listed on the Residential Resilience cost-benefit matrix. He explained that the Parametric Insurance Product is a type of insurance which pays claims based on the occurrence of an objective trigger event rather than a standard claims adjustment process. He noted that the most impactful projects typically require a great deal of effort, and that there were few “Quick Wins” apparent. He noted that a perfect project would be rated green in all aspects.
- Monte noted that the Flood and Sewer Line Backup Insurance category has not yet been rated for prioritization of vulnerable populations.
- Nick invited comment from the Task Force members.
- *from Lindsay Brugger to everyone in the Chat: 2:35 PM - I appreciate the recognition of a need for flood insurance subsidy. I would hope that subsidy would be offered through a separate program so the insurance pricing itself can reflect the true level of risk*
- Phillip noted that a key decision point would be whether a local insurance project would be purchased through the private sector or operated by the District. Salil acknowledged how that question would be addressed in later phases.

Category 2: Repair Flood Damage in Low-Income Homes and Neighborhoods | Lead Agency - HSEMA

- Vermechia explained that this category was intended to help residents after a flood (i.e. by providing remediation services). A key decision point would be which agency would implement the actions and whether they would be implemented through new or existing service areas. Further conversation needs to be held regarding the level of effort, especially since most actions require multi-agency effort. She noted that public education and awareness was an opportunity for low-effort/high-benefit work, especially if focused on areas that are vulnerable to sewer backflow flooding. Vermechia also noted that many of the actions in Category 2 are a bridge to longer-term solutions in Categories 3 and 4.
- Salil affirmed that the actions are interlinked.

Category 3: Floodproof Individual Homes and Facilities | Lead Agency - DOEE

- Nick explained that this category focuses on pre-flood (rather than post-flood) actions. The category contains two actions: retrofits and elevation surveys. He explained that elevation surveys are a prerequisite for many other resilience actions and shared news of DOEE's FY23 budget enhancement request for FloodSmart Homes retrofits.

Category 4: Sewer Line Backups and Backwater Valve Installation | Lead Agency – DC Water

- Salil noted that discussions with Chris and Vermechia informed this category, and that HSEMA has already applied for a FEMA grant to support backwater valve installation. He explained that restroom fixtures located below sewer manhole elevation would periodically surcharge (overflow) unless fixed. Chris has helped identify a path to implementing a backflow valve requirement.

Overall

- Nick and Meredith requested feedback from the participants; Meredith highlighted that many of the Residential Resilience measures will provide substantial benefit to vulnerable populations. She noted that the choice of funding source would be a key decision point for the insurance actions.
- Jed noted that a key decision point would be the role of DC agencies compared to that of the private market. For instance, a captive insurance company would be heavily subsidized and would require a great deal of legislative effort. However, it would be more effective at helping vulnerable residents than a private-sector-based solution which would require less effort. In the former, the District would sell insurance directly to residents and purchase reinsurance as necessary. In the latter, the District would subsidize or encourage residents to purchase coverage from a private third party. The choice is analogous to that presented by the backwater valve installation program (i.e., would the District install the valves directly or refer residents to private plumbers).
- *from RRD Meetings to everyone in the Chat: 2:53 PM - A note from Karen Sistrunk: Maybe it should be some form of a public-private partnership, so that the cost is shared by government, private industry and consumers.*
- *from Jane Waters to everyone in the Chat: 2:55 PM - also need to make sure that the private citizens renew annually*
- Nick considered how the Action Teams could help inform the decision.
- Philip noted that the District cannot force the private sector to offer specific products, so market research would have to be conducted to see what products are available. Salil noted that private firms leaving the market or ceasing to offer coverage would be a risk. Jed explained the operation of the District's existing medical malpractice captive and addressed certain challenges that would result from the administrative process of the District acting as an insurance carrier for vulnerable populations. He noted that creating a captive for flood coverage would be a high-effort/high-benefit solution compared to a solution that centered the private sector. Nick noted that an insurance subcommittee may be necessary to further explore Category 1.

GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION ACTION TEAMS

Category 5: Flood Mitigation Infrastructure Projects | Lead Agency - DMOI

- Alan noted that the listed ideas vary widely in scale (i.e., the Blue Plains Floodwall compared to a series of parks). Nick explained that the Integrated Flood Model could help identify new project ideas and that the project list could be updated annually with Task Force input.
- Salil proposed creating a small-scale demonstration park to illustrate the features of the flood-resilient park/open space project.
- *from Stephen Gyor to everyone in the Chat: 3:06 PM - DPR and OP have secured funding from FEMA to do some pilot resilient small parks and open space projects that could be a model for spaces across the District*

Category 6: Regulations, Legislation, Compliance, and Permitting | Lead Agency – DCRA & DOEE

- Chris explained that Flood Resilience Legislation is a project that could occur throughout the Construction Code cycles. He noted that the Construction Codes comprise multiple disciplines such as Building, Fire, Plumbing, etc. Chris requested input from the public and from city leaders regarding the Flood Resilience Fee. He explained that some floodplain regulations are set by FEMA and noted that DOEE and DCRA have a productive partnership with regard to amending Appendix G of the Construction Codes. Chris explained that the code enforcement and permitting process begins with communications and outreach to inform proactive decision-making among the regulated community. Additionally, changes and updates must be recorded internally and incorporated into the permitting process.
- Chris noted that DCRA does not regulate federal facilities because it is a District agency. Regulating federal facilities would require a creative collaboration with the federal government. A partnership informed by data from the Task Force process could result in a better working relationship than an authoritative structure. Julia Koster noted that regulation of the federal government is not within the District’s purview and requested a revision to Action 6.6 (“Regulate Federal Facilities”). She highlighted the role of the NCPC in fostering collaboration and coordination between federal and District floodplain requirements. Shared standards could be beneficial in priority waterfront areas.
- Julia inquired as to the role of the collaborative review projects (i.e., Military Installation Resilience Review). Chris noted that they are located in another section.
- *from Julia Koster to everyone in the Chat: 3:14 PM - Thanks, Christopher!*
- Salil asked if insurance actions could be coordinated with regulatory actions; Chris expressed interest in cooperation but was hesitant to link insurance and code requirements. Salil provided an example of changes to basement regulations to reduce insurance premiums. Chris offered to provide data on types of building work that would address insurance factors.
- Nick noted that code changes and updates to the Flood Hazard Rules are already in progress. Additionally, the Council is currently considering enabling legislation for the Flood Resilience Act.

Category 7: Mapping and Modeling | Lead Agency – DC Water & DOEE

- Meredith acknowledged the abundance of existing maps and models from sources such as USACE and MWCOG. She highlighted the initiation of the Integrated Flood Model project and noted that DOEE had requested additional funding to complete the IFM. The FEMA map update action is already in progress to refine the boundaries of the 100-year and 500-year floodplains. Meredith noted that the rain gage and storm monitoring actions could vary in level

of effort required and that the scales of benefit could range from neighborhood-specific to citywide.

- Jed noted that rain gage data and storm monitoring would be key to a successful parametric insurance program, as such programs use a trigger event rather than an analysis of loss.
- Salil noted that existing traffic and safety cameras could be used for flood monitoring.
- *from Lindsay Brugger in the Chat to everyone: 3:23 PM - MA has created a climate change clearinghouse, including a set of climate resilience design standards and guidelines. Publicly funded projects are required to assess and address all hazards via this site. Is this on DC's radar? It's certainly a resource-heavy project and one that expands beyond flood, but perhaps a longer-term goal to build towards? https://resilientma.org/rmat_home/designstandards/*
- Meredith responded to Lindsay by highlighting the recent release of the DC Resilient Design Guidelines. Lindsay noted that the Massachusetts guidelines have an associated mapping portal and represent regulatory requirements for all public developments.
- Uwe noted that it would be helpful for the Task Force to set a common set of model development standards, as modeling assumptions can vary and are often not transparent. Meredith noted that Action 7.4 (“Model Clearinghouse”) may address that topic.

Category 8: Flood Mitigation Planning and Coordination | Lead Agency - DMOI

- Alan noted that each action in this category has limited tangible value by itself but would help streamline efforts to create physical mitigation projects. He proposed adding “Coordination with MWCOG” to the list.
- Salil proposed adding “Outreach to Schools” to the public outreach action. Meredith noted that other action ideas included public outreach components and that Category 9 was not exhaustive.

Category 9: Flood Emergency Planning, Response, and Recovery | Lead Agency - DMOI

- Carolyn noted that HSEMA has begun to analyze available tools and technology (both internally and at partner agencies) to support actions in this category.
- Salil expressed support for Action 9.4 (“Create a centralized system for flood complaints”) due to the call volume that occurs after flood events. Wes noted that HSEMA has begun to work on Action 9.4. Philip shared the Affordable Care Act guiding principle for public interaction (‘No Wrong Door’) as a potential case study for the flood reporting process.
- Nick mentioned that DOEE and DDOT are currently pursuing grant funding for roadway flood warning signs. Salil noted that the signs should be placed at underpasses that flood frequently.

3:45 pm | Upcoming Public Listening Sessions

Apera requested the attendance of Task Force members at the Public Listening Sessions and asked for ideas regarding structure of the meetings. Identified that the goal is for the meetings to occur in March before the next Full Task Force Meeting, on a virtual platform to be announced soon.

3:47 pm | Next Steps

Meredith noted that Action Team meetings would occur in February and assigned the following prep tasks for each agency:

- Identify any endorsement/support needed from Task Force.
- Provide any updates on Action Items and Effort-Benefit Evaluations.
- Add relevant reports/interagency efforts to the collaboration.
- Identify individual actions your agency can lead.

3:48 pm | Closeout

Director Wells highlighted the opportunity for the Task Force to be a vehicle for public outreach. CEO Gadis concurred and reiterated the potential for the Task Force to be a case study for other communities.

from Andrew Gerst to everyone the Chat: 3:53 PM - Thanks all!

The meeting ENDED at 3:53 pm.

Additional Materials

A copy of the staff presentation used during the meeting, the meeting recording, and a transcript of any in meeting chat comments can be accessed at dcfloodtaskforce.org.