



DC Flood Task Force Meeting Minutes

**DC Flood Task Force
Public Listening Session
Meeting Minutes
March 28, 2022
Virtual WebEx Meeting
11:00am – 12:30pm**

Meeting began on 3/28 at 11:00am with the following members, agencies, and support staff in attendance.

Attending Voting Members and Support Staff

Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure (DMOI)

1. Alan Propp

DC Water and Sewer Authority (DC Water)

1. Salil Kharkar
2. Apera Nwora
3. Emanuel D. Briggs
4. Matt Ries
5. Joe Edwards
6. Kirsten B. Williams
7. Rial Coleman
8. Barbara Mitchell

DC Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE)

1. Tommy Wells
2. Meredith Upchurch
3. Nicholas Bonard
4. Martin Koch
4. Lily Cheng
6. Josh Schnitzlein
7. Victor Ukpolo
8. Andrea Limauro

DC Department of Transportation (DDOT)

1. Ravindra Ganvir
2. Stephen Varga

DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Authority (HSEMA)

1. Vermechia Alsop

DC Office of Planning (OP)

1. Elisa Vitale
2. Andree Entezari
3. Stephen Gyor
4. Rebecca Schwartzman

DC Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking (DISB)

1. Philip Barlow
2. Philip Edmonds
3. Sharon Shipp

DC Department of Public Works

1. Andrew Gerst

Facilitators

1. Monte Monash
2. Rachel Kendrick
3. Kimberly Manning
4. Enora Moss
5. Adria Anderson

Members of the Public

Brenda Lee Richardson
Christine MacDonald
Hadiah Jordan
Jason Cumberbatch
Jamoni Overby
Jermaine Brown
Jeannie Bellina
Jesse Ponce de Leon
John Shen
Justin Lini
Marchim Williams
Michelle Diller
Mike Henry
Robert Hershey
Robin Lewis
Tracey Butler
Valca Valentine

11:03 am | Welcome and Opening Remarks

Monte Monash started the meeting and reviewed rules of engagement.

11:05 pm | Greeting from Director Tommy Wells

Dir Wells acknowledged that climate has changed, and this means increased flooding in DC, including internal flooding. Recent flood events have caused damage for residents of the District. The “100-yr” flood is no longer a 100-year flood. The City Administrator’s office requested the assembly of this Flood Task Force to address flooding concerns in the district.

11:07 am | Flood Task Force Introduction

Monte reviews the Summary of the Task Force. The Flood Task Force was established by the City Administrator on September 23, 2021. The Task Force Kick off meeting occurred on November 17, 2021. The Task Force reports to the Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure. DC Water and DOEE are Co-Chairs. The Task Force consists of 13 DC Agency members, and 16 Consulting Members (Federal & Public Partners). All Task Force and Action Team meetings are open to the public and available on DCFloodTaskForce.org. Today’s meeting will be recorded.

Apera Nwora shares the Task Force Timeline: First Meeting was on November 17, 2021, 2nd Mtg on January 19, 2022, 3rd Mtg on March 16, 2022, Two Public Listening Sessions (March 28 & March 31, 2022), 4th Mtg on May 18, 2022.

The goal of the public listening sessions is to hear from the public on their experiences and to collect their input which will influence the Flood Task Force actions. In addition to DCFloodTaskForce.org, DOEE has created an interactive map at DCFloodRisk.org

Enora Moss presents on Community Topics & Public Discussion and reviews the rules of engagement. Community Topics to be covered:

- Where does it flood?
- How are you impacted when int floods?
- Potential floodproofing solutions for homes
- Potential flood insurance solutions
- Neighborhood-scale infrastructure
- Emergency response and recovery

Nick Bonard provides overview on first topic *Where does it flood?*: Types of flooding include riverine flooding, coastal flooding (includes Sea level rise and when hurricane pushes water in from the Potomac), and inland flooding. Nick shows FEMA mapped floodplains in the District, which don't identify areas at risk of interior flooding. Additionally, Nick shows a map highlighting areas in red that have flooded in the District, but are not identified on FEMA map. He invites the public to Submit a Story at DCFloodrisk.org.

Caller asks about storm drain flooding, and timeline of projects to be completed on Rhode Island Ave (as part of DC clean rivers project).

Salil Khakar: permit requires the project to be completed by 2025. The project is ahead of schedule, and should be completed by 2023.

Justin Lini: Ward 7 resident at Kenilworth Parkside, in the Watts Branch watershed. Wanted to discuss inland flooding of Anacostia Ave, and Neville Thomas Elementary School tends to have inland flooding as well. Not sure what the options are. Wanted to bring up the restoration of Nash Run. Water levels have been exceptionally high recently, is that functioning correctly or does it require maintenance?

Nick: thanks for sharing, we are documenting

Kirsten (Guest): Is there a place where projects are posted, so people know when projects are happening in their area?

Emanuel: you may locate information on all active DC Water construction projects at <https://www.dcwater.com/projects>

Meredith: Different agencies have project lists you can access. There is not a consolidated list of current flood risk mitigation projects. You will see a list of potential projects later in the presentation.

Justin Lini: Forgot two other places where we have interior flooding. At the Eastern Ave NE underpass between Minnesota Ave and Olive St where the street passes below the CSX and Metrorail tracks. Also, Nannie Helen Burroughs Ave NE where it crosses under 295. Both of these can cause obstructions entering/exiting neighborhoods which can spill over onto 295.

Nick: Justin thanks for this. We definitely know about the 295 underpass. Take a look at our webpage on Watts Branch – it needs to be updated for our latest dates, but there is a recent report on a few alternatives to help reduce flood risk in the area. We are planning to begin more outreach in the

neighborhood to get feedback on designs: <https://doee.dc.gov/service/watts-branch-neighborhoods-flood-risk-management>

Kirsten (Guest): After work has been completed, what is done to keep these things maintained?

Nick: Maintenance responsibility is spread across agencies, but if there are any continuous issues, please contact us.

Jessie Ponce de Leon: DOEE does such a great job holding designers to a standard to try and control stormwater runoff both on private property and public right of way, and installing infrastructure (such as inlets and catch basins) to help mitigate overflow/flooding issues; but then those structures are within DC Water's control to maintain and keep flushed. This transfer of responsibility seems to cause a lot of issues that could be avoided if increased maintenance requirements were adhered to by DC Water.

Nick: Question for the public – When it floods, how does it affect you? How does it affect the residents? This will help the Task Force understand what needs to be improved. When it flooded, were you forced to stay somewhere else? Were you forced to make repairs (if so what kind, how much?) How does it affect you emotionally? And how do you think the government can help?

Jermaine Brown: I'm a stormwater contractor and District resident. The issue with all green infrastructure in the District is poor maintenance, which is adding to the increased inland flooding issues. My property sits on Nash Run and in front of the stream restoration installation. Also it hasn't been maintained. We need more money out there into stormwater infrastructure.

Meredith: Hi Jermaine – the District received Federal ARPA money that will be applied to Green Infrastructure maintenance. You should see a big effort coming to GI maintenance.

Kirsten (Guest): If the govt could provide resources like hay to help with the flooding, that would be helpful. Also could the govt give people \$500 to help with flood issues or at least provide long-term no interest loans to help people with the financial impacts.

Kirsten (Guest): I imagine that it doesn't help with property values and the overall infrastructure of the city.

Nick: I'm curious to know of the government giving people money or low interest loans, what do you envision it would be paying for, so we can hear your thoughts.

Kirsten (Guest): I don't live in DC, but sump pumps, French drains, hay, gutters, can help a lot with getting flooding away from the house. Flood damage is so expensive. A solution I've done is putting down waterproof flooring, but it's very expensive and not affordable for everyone. It's also not good for property values that people see the signs of perpetual flooding.

Marchim Williams: Sewer backup and sump pumps play a large role in flooding and prevention. Making sure that sewers are clear and areas with sump pumps are fully operational prior to large rain events.

Justin Lini: The catch basins are at 709-715 Anacostia. DC Water's catch basins tend to get overwhelmed here. There is a sizable stormwater management system for this development, so other areas are well-drained but this particular area catches water from much of the area.

The stormwater best management practice (rain garden) I mentioned is at 679 Anacostia Ave. I think the rain garden is maintained by the HOA for that development.

Salil: Justin thank you. We will follow up.

Brenda Richardson: Some folks in Ward 8 are concerned about naturalizing the Oxon Run stream and its potential impact on flooding. What steps will be taken to maintain the stream once the naturalization process has been completed to prevent flooding in this floodplain?

Nick: I will connect you with Josh Burch to discuss this.

Jeannie Bellina (Guest): Some sources of funding (Rainplan <https://myrainplan.com>) (US EPA Green Infrastructure Funding Opportunities: <https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure-funding-opportunities>)

Jamoni Overby: Can you discuss what happened to the expired Flood Assistance Fund Program mentioned by CM McDuffie in the past Flood and Climate Resilience hearing? Any chances of that being rekindled?

11:46 pm | Floodproofing Solutions

Nick: Two options are being considered as floodproofing solutions: backwater valve installation and FloodSmart Homes

Salil: Why do you need a backwater valve, and where do you need it? Building code requires that if you have a fixture below the manhole lid, you need a backwater valve. DC Water provides free or subsidized backwater valve installation at properties susceptible to sewage backup due to heavy rainfall.

Brenda: Have you done an assessment of all the homes in the floodplain in Wards 7 & 8 as it relates to the backwater valve? I don't think people would generally know if they have a backwater valve.

Salil: DC Water doesn't have documentation on who has backwater valves, the best thing residents can do is have a plumber look at their pipes.

Nick: FloodSmart Homes the idea is to provide financial assistance to help homeowners retrofit their homes to reduce flood risk.

Step 1: Residents in the floodplain can sign up for a free resilience assessment:

<https://bit.ly/floodpreventiondc>

Step 2: DOEE contractor to conduct assessment, recommend mitigation measures

Step 3: DOEE contractor to install mitigation measures at minimal cost to resident

Nick: Are we focusing on the right things with the backwater valve and FloodSmart Homes program?

Michelle Diller: What types of homes are available for these free resilience assessments?

Nick: Right now our idea is to focus on residential single and two-family structures, but for anyone who wants a resilience assessment, we encourage you to sign up on the link, and we will try to assess as many residents as possible given our funding. We are prioritizing 100-yr floodplain residents now, but hoping to assess further.

Kirsten (Guest): Now, are these currently running and fully funded? If so, what is the capacity of the programs? Can these two programs run together as a one-stop shop? Can they go door to door for these

programs in the most at-risk and hardest hit areas? Who will qualify? Will there be a minimum (i.e. \$500) that anyone can qualify regardless of income?

Nick: No, right now they're not currently funded. The Task Force is coming up with ideas for DC residents, if they sound useful, then we will look into how to fund. Getting the word out that these programs exist is really important and something we have planned. We know how many homes are in the 100-yr floodplain, but we don't know how many of them need or want these assessments. Our goal is for everyone who needs and wants these assessments to have access to them. We don't yet know if there will be rate increases for residents.

Brenda: How do you define minimal cost to resident?

Nick: No specific numbers yet.

Kirsten: Do you plan to do a survey on the ground area to gain the info you talked about? Will the public be allowed to participate in the flood task force?

Nick: The goal of FloodSmart Homes is to assess the homes themselves, as a ground survey from the outside may not identify all the flood mitigation needs of the house. The Flood Task Force meetings are open to the public.

Brenda: How will folks know if they are being charged fairly for mitigation solutions?

12:00 pm | Flood Insurance

Nick: Right now, everyone in the District can get insurance from the National Flood Insurance Program or through private flood insurance. Homeowner's insurance does not include flood insurance. We are considering options that offer quicker payouts and/or are potentially more affordable. Where do you think the government can help?

Questions to consider:

How much would you be willing to pay?

How important is it to get reimbursed in 2 days vs. 30 days?

What events/items would you want insurance to cover?

Jermaine: How can I get involved with helping ramp up the flood assessment?

Nick: Will share contact for you to get connected – please email flood.risk@dc.gov to be connected to our team that will be working on outreach.

Kirsten (Guest): Is it fair to put the financial burden on the public? Especially if the water is coming from the storm drains not draining fast enough. Could someone please type the current insurance in the chat please?

Nick: That is a very fair question, not comfortable giving a response on behalf of the entire District government, but good for our agencies to hear this feedback.

Insurance information

- Average cost of a flood insurance policy in DC in the 100-yr floodplain: \$3,000
- There are currently only 1,911 policies in force in DC; only 13% are for properties in the 100-yr floodplain
- Deductibles range from \$1,000-10,000 (residential) or \$1,000-50,000 (commercial)

- Coverage limit of \$250,000 building/\$100,000 contents (residential) or \$500,000 building/\$500,000 contents (commercial)
- Losses assessed by adjuster

Nick: To sign up for a free resilience assessment: <https://bit.ly/floodpreventiondc>

Brenda Richardson: I am concerned about the equity issues around the contracting and flood insurance (about folks not being overcharged). This is a huge financial hardship for folks in disfavored communities in Wards 7 & 8.

Nick: Task Force is aware that paying for flood insurance is a huge burden for disfavored communities in the District, and we are looking into alternatives.

Jeannie Bellina: The DC Clean Rivers Project (DCCR) is implementing a voluntary program for FREE downspout disconnections with a FREE rain barrel in select areas. Join us and help clean the District's rivers. Downspout disconnection involves cutting the downspout, attaching an elbow and extension to direct the stormwater to flow away from the house onto the lawn or pervious area or into a rain barrel, and capping the standpipe. <https://www.dewater.com/projects/downspout-disconnection-program#:~:text=Project%20Description,help%20clean%20the%20District's%20rivers>

Jamoni Overby: Also concerned with the equity issues, would love to hear more information or any developments surrounding a general flood assistance fund for low-income communities.

Nick: If you had a general assistance fund, what would you like it to be distributed for?

Jamoni Overby: To be used for some of the solutions you all suggested for homes in the flood plains and better infrastructure. Criteria or amount of assistance defined by a need-based assessment of household income/accessibility

Kirsten (Guest): Most at-risk first while also prioritizing low-income for funding purposes. A basic funding package for everyone regardless of income in the highest hit areas with a scale for income (EX: 100,000 gets 500, 80,000 gets 600, 20,000 is free up to x dollars)

Jermaine: The district needs to let ratepayers finance stormwater project and reap the financial benefit, meaning they can be paid back with stormwater credits for these infrastructure project, that is already being done in our Stormwater Retention Credit program ratepayer private financing.

Meredith: A lot of creative financing is needed, but we would love to talk more about this.

12:14pm | Infrastructure Projects

Meredith presenting on neighborhood-scale infrastructure projects that have been identified so far as a need. Some have been funded, some have not. How should we prioritize projects? We want to focus on how we are protecting District residents, particularly low-income residents.

Citywide	SW	SE	NE	NW
Citywide Stormwater Management Improvements	SW/Buzzard Point Living Shoreline	Oxon Run Stream and Wetland Restoration	Watts Branch Flood Mitigation Infrastructure	Cleveland Park Drainage and Stormwater Improvement
Sewer Rehabilitation Projects	SW Resilient Parks/Green Infrastructure	DC Water Headquarters and Main & O Pump Station	Kenilworth Park North (Watts Branch/Anacostia) Environmental Study	Canal Road Culvert
Flood Signs and Flood Warning Sensors	Greenleaf Gardens Flood Retrofits			Stormwater Improvements in Palisades (Potomac Ave. and MacArthur Blvd.)
Districtwide Small Parks and Open Space for Mitigation Projects	Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant Floodwall			National Mall/Federal Triangle Pump Station (Federal)
WMATA Projects to Protect Metro Stations and Infrastructure	Join Base Anacostia-Bolling and Naval Research Laboratory (Federal)			
Evaluation of Existing Projects/Future Capital Projects in Floodplains	Fort McNair (Federal)			
Citywide Blue-Green Infrastructure in Public Space	DC Potomac Park Levee System Modifications (Federal)			
	Tidal Basin (Federal)			

Brenda: The Mayor is promoting an ecosystem of equity. I think projects east of the river should be a priority.

Jeannie: I agree with you, Brenda.

Jermaine: Decentralized financing, is the mute problem fixed. I'd like to say more that would be too much to type.

Justin: What is the broader strategy for mitigating sea level rise for DC? A lot of my neighbors are lower elevation.

Nick: A lot of this is regulatory, such as limiting building in areas to be impacted by sea level rise. In Watts Branch, when you are flooded it is typically coming from Watts Branch itself or coming from interior inland flooding, which is less affected by sea level rise. Areas near the Anacostia River will be more vulnerable, so it really depends on neighborhood.

Jermaine: As a District resident, a lot of these projects will take a lot of residential help and help from the District to get the word out. Creating jobs with this stormwater infrastructure, need to let residents know they can make passive income with implementing these programs available through the District. In the SE if we invested in these projects, we can benefit ourselves.

Kirsten: Can they create a campaign around these programs? Working with outside organizations to let people know about these resources? Giving presentations to kids at school, fairs, food drives, etc.

Enora: Yes, we are grateful for your feedback.

Brenda: APAAC did an equity tour with Dr. Amber Hewitt on Friday, at Watts Branch in Ward 7. The stream is clearly neglected, and it's concerning that as we continue to look at things thru the framework of equity, it's one thing to talk about it and another to do something about it. It's my fear that what happened at Watts Branch will happen with Oxon Run. I am concerned about trust issues as well between the government and the community.

12:30pm

| Flood Response and Recovery

Salil: When you have an issue, who do you call for flooding problems? What was your experience after the last flood? Where could government improve in our response?

Brenda: I've had a flood in my house, one of the things I've learned is how do we know the source of flooding is coming from in order to know who to call? Recently spoke with another resident who experienced flooding due to poor construction drainage.

Salil: Are you saying it would be helpful to have assistance in finding the source of flooding?

Brenda: Yes.

Salil: Thank you

Jeannie: Other outreach possibilities: church programs, postcard surveys at locally owned Black businesses after explaining to storeowners what surveys are about and keeping them until you collect them (worked great when I worked for an African American neighborhood – went from 81 responses to 256 responses a month later, including a City Council election and the Christmas holidays)

Enora: Thank you for your valuable feedback.

Kirsten (Guest): Who are you supposed to call? How long does it take for ppl to get back to you?

Salil: You can call DC Water, and DC Water aims to respond in under 4 hours but we will confirm. If flooding is not related to DC Water, I am not aware of the level of service for other agencies.

Marchim: The Office of the People's Counsel is a great source for flood assistance.

12:35 pm

| Closeout

Kim Manning:

Upcoming Meetings

Public Listening Session #2 March 31, 2022 6-7:30pm via Microsoft teams

Next Task Force Meeting May 18, 2022 from 2-4pm via Webex

Rachel Kendrick: the website is dcfloodtaskforce.org

Kim Manning: You can stay in contact at DCFloodTaskForce@dc.gov

Director Wells: This has been a lot of information, it's a lot to take in. There are two or three takeaways: one is we are really trying to figure out how to protect people's households from flooding because we know it's going to happen; second is we are focusing on equity and inclusion with our work; third, we are not going to wait to implement programs at the end of the task force, we will be trying to implement as we go such as with FloodSmart Homes. Thank you everyone for being a part of this and helping us learn and think through how to keep District residents and their households and assets safe from the increasing risk of flooding due to climate change.