

DC Flood Task Force | Public Listening Session



**DC Flood Task Force
Public Listening Session
Meeting Minutes
March 31, 2022 | 6:00pm – 7:30pm
Virtual Teams Webinar Meeting**

Meeting began at 6:05 PM with the following members, agencies, support staff and public participants in attendance.

VM = Voting Members

Attending Voting Members and Support Staff

District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (DC Water)

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|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. David L. Gadis Co-Chair (VM) | 4. Barbara Mitchell | 8. Emanuel D. Briggs |
| 2. Salil M. Kharkar | 5. Lisa Barton | |
| 3. Apera Nwora | 6. Rial Coleman | |
| | 7. Kirsten B. Williams | |

District of Columbia Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE)

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Tommy Wells Co-Chair (VM) | 3. Lily Cheng | 6. Victor Ukpolo |
| 2. Meredith Upchurch | 4. Joshua Schnitzlein | |
| | 5. Martin Koch | |

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

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| 1. Vermechia Alsop | 2. Carolyn Mejia |
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District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT)

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|------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Ravindra Gavir (VM) | 2. EJ Simie |
|------------------------|-------------|

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

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Philip Barlow | 2. Philip Edmonds | 3. Patrice Garnette |
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District of Columbia Department of Public Works (DPW)

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| 1. Andrew Gerst |
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Attending Consulting Members and Support Staff

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

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|-------------------|
| 1. Robert Preston |
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District of Columbia Office of the People's Counsel (OPC)

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| 1. Yohannes Mariam |
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District of Columbia Building Industry Association (DCBIA)

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| 1. Cell Bernardino |
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Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO)

1. Donna Cooper

Facilitation Team - Monash Advisory Group

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Monte Monash | 3. Adria Anderson | 5. Rachel Kendrick |
| 2. Kimberly Manning | 4. Enora Moss | 6. Nick Hall |

Public/Other Attendees

- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 1. Dawn Fox | 6. Kelly Collins Choi | 11. Kayla |
| 2. Georgia Parolski | 7. Michelle James | 12. Zandra |
| 3. Lisben Choj | 8. Ben Curran | |
| 4. Nora Jackson | 9. Felicia | |
| 5. Spencer Balog | 10. Tsehay M. | |

There were 8 unidentified call-in participants and 1 participant who joined anonymously.

6:05 pm | Welcome and Opening Remarks

Facilitator Monte Monash (Monash Advisory Group) started the meeting and reviewed rules of engagement. Monte provided a list of instructions on how participants could share their comments in the virtual setting based on how they joined the meeting.

6:08 pm | Flood Task Force Introduction

Monte reviewed 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). It will produce an Action Plan informed by public input by November 2022. 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 (DC Water) provided an overview of the Task Force Timeline. She encouraged members of the public to share their concerns, ask questions, and seek clarity on any unfamiliar terms. She directed participants to the dcfloodtaskforce.org and DCFloodRisk.org websites.

6:15 pm | Greeting from Chair David Gadis

DC Water CEO David Gadis thanked Co-Chair Wells and collaborating District agencies. He acknowledged the devastation of the September 10th [2020] floods and emphasized the importance of resilience planning and green infrastructure maintenance to prevent future flood events. He noted that inclusivity is a goal of the Task Force and explained that public input could help the District withstand future storms. He compared the public engagement components of the Task Force to a highly productive stakeholder engagement effort at DC Water.

6:19 pm | Community Topics and Public Discussion

Janice, a Ward 5 resident, stated that she had many issues from the 09/10 flood including incomplete cleanup and a 3-month delay in contact from the cleaning crew. Her basement is still not finished, and she reported using her own funds to facilitate further cleanup. She noted that crews do not want to

perform work (such as installing a backwater valve) without a release of funds from DC Water. Enora Moss (MAG) responded that this topic would be addressed during the presentation and thanked Janice for sharing her experience.

Where Does it Flood?

Meredith Upchurch (DOEE) categorized flooding as three different types: riverine, coastal, and interior. She invited participants to share information on where they have observed flooding. She provided an overview of where FEMA floodplains, which depict only coastal and riverine flooding, are mapped. She also displayed a map of known interior flooding zones that are not identified on FEMA maps and noted that public input would be helpful for validating DOEE's Integrated Flood Model.

Enora invited participants to share specific addresses and street names where flooding has been observed.

- A Ward 5 resident reported flooding at S. Dakota Ave. and 20th St. NE.

How Are You Impacted When It Floods?

Enora invited participants to share personal impacts of flooding (financial and emotional).

- A phone participant noted that the September 2020 flood was a traumatizing experience, as renovating mold damage in her basement cost approximately \$10-15,000. She noted that a cleanup contractor was procured through the city and asked if similar assistance would be available for more substantial repairs. Salil Kharkar (DC Water) explained that the assistance program only covered the first \$5-6,000 to remove water. The participant explained that the cleanup contractor removed portions of the walls but did not restore the living space. She asked if assistance for post-cleanup repairs would be available from the city. Salil invited her to share her contact info so that he could relay her concern to DC Water's Risk Manager.

Potential Floodproofing Solutions for Homes

Salil explained why backwater valves are necessary. When sewer pipes fill with water, wastewater can flow backward through fixtures that are lower than manhole covers in the street. A backwater valve is simply a flapper in the pipe that prevents such events. Backwater valves are a code requirement for new construction, but older homes may not have them, and homeowners may not know if their homes have them.

He explained that the 2012 Bloomingdale flood primarily occurred in the combined (sanitary/storm) sewer area, while the 2020 flood primarily occurred in the separate sewer area. DC Water created a program to provide backwater valves to homeowners that suffered flood damage. Participating plumbers agree to install the valve before receiving payment from DC Water. He invited Janice to share her contact information to help resolve her concern.

[6:42 PM] Michelle James (Guest)

I was told there is a statute of limitations for claims. Is it 2 or 3 years?

Salil responded that he would research the question before responding.

A participant from Ward 8 asked for documentation of the prior Listening Session. Enora directed her to the DC Flood Task Force website.

A participant reported that her parents' neighborhood (corner of Columbia Rd. and Sherman Ave.) in Columbia Heights had experienced flooding concerns for nearly 30 years. A plumber told her that many of the flood issues in the neighborhood are a result of sewer overflow. She had a backwater valve installed through DC Water's program but flooding continued due to water seeping through the basement foundation. She asked if other forms of floodproofing assistance were available and if DC Water would provide guidance on qualified plumbers. The home has two sump pumps, which are insufficient to control the flooding. Her plumber recommended floodproofing. Salil asked for her contact info.

[6:47 PM] Ben Curran (Guest)

Do you have information on what the flood group DC Silverjackets is?

Meredith explained that the Silver Jackets is a national effort run by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that has organized a group of local agencies to address flooding.

[6:49 PM] Zandra

If we have sump pumps, can we get a discount on the flood insurance?

Martin Koch (DOEE) shared FEMA documentation and stated:

Zandra - sump pumps specifically do not decrease the cost of flood insurance, but other measures such as installing crawlspace flood vents, elevating utility equipment, and obtaining an Elevation Certificate can help lower premiums.

[6:54 PM] Michelle James (Guest)

I had a backwater valve installed last week by Jiffy Plumbing. I just submitted my backwater valve paperwork to Emanuel Briggs 5 minutes ago. I am a single mother and I hope that I won't have to wait months in order to receive my reimbursement of \$5450.

Meredith provided an introduction to the FloodSmart Homes retrofit assistance program, shared the invitation letter that was provided to floodplain residents, and invited participants to indicate their interest.

[6:59 PM] Michelle James (Guest)

Can you please drop the link in the chat

[7:00 PM] Rachel Kendrick

<https://bit.ly/floodpreventiondc>

[7:02 PM] Michelle James (Guest)

Thank you. That was the link!

Flood Insurance Solutions

Meredith explained that flood insurance can cost approximately \$3,000 annually for properties in a floodplain but costs a few hundred dollars annually for properties outside the floodplain. She provided an overview of the coverage available through the National Flood Insurance Program. She identified that the delay caused by the NFIP adjustment process is a challenge. She also noted that affordability is a challenge for the NFIP. Meredith explained that the District is working with insurance experts to explore alternative options.

[7:06 PM] Zandra

Will the city help seniors on fixed incomes to cover the installation of those measures...?

Meredith explained that such assistance is the goal of the FloodSmart Homes program.

[7:06 PM] Barlow, Philip (DISB)

To add to Martin's response to Zandra, a homeowners policy does not cover sewer backup, a separate endorsement is necessary. There is no requirement for sewer backup coverage to give a discount for having a working sump pump, but some insurers may. The cost of adding sewer backup coverage is not expensive and should be considered.

Phillip Barlow (DISB) explained that the District is addressing issues such as payment speed and flood remediation when developing a local insurance solution. The cost of repairing post-remediation damage is also a consideration.

Neighborhood-Scale Infrastructure

Salil explained that different agencies have different projects in different locations. A goal of the Task Force is to create a unified map of infrastructure projects. Another Task Force goal is to create an interactive real-time map of flood incidents. Salil shared a chart with an overview of infrastructure projects in various locations. He highlighted Watts Branch and Oxon Run, as these areas have known flood challenges as well as projects in progress to provide solutions.

Meredith noted that the Task Force aims to prioritize projects so that the greatest need is addressed first. Salil highlighted the Integrated Flood Model, which will build a flood model for the city using an array of data elements.

Emergency Response

Salil noted that residents not knowing who to call for assistance is a key challenge. A goal is to provide one point of contact for routing flood complaints.

[7:17 PM] Ben Curran (Guest)

Have to leave in a minute or two. This has been a fantastic opportunity to provide input and learn about flood planning and response in DC. Thank you.

[7:18 PM] Tsehay M. (Guest)

It would be great to have a one stop shop that includes a website, phone and email for residents to express flooding problems. The flood task force website may be a great place to start a helpline of sorts.

[7:20 PM] Zandra

There needs to be a community response team specifically aimed at flooding in neighborhoods, and I think the priority area where 87% of homeowners should get priority attention. This was a good meeting, thanks and keep reaching out. Peace

[7:20 PM] Kimberly Manning

@Teshay thank you. Please visit the site for updates and information

7:19 pm | Conclusion

CEO Gadis thanked attendees for their participation and emphasized the need to prevent flooding on the scale of September 10 from happening again. DOEE Director Tommy Wells praised the DOEE team and highlighted the benefits of DC Water's Clean Rivers Project flood mitigation tunnel system. He noted the speed at which the Task Force is working to develop recommendations.

A participant asked whether the District is working to make flood insurance more affordable for residents. Philip replied that the District is working to create a funding pool for means-tested flood insurance assistance.

Enora thanked attendees for their participation.

[7:25 PM] Upchurch, Meredith (DOEE)

Thank you all for attending!

The meeting ENDED at 7:26 pm.

Additional Materials

A copy of the staff presentation used during the meeting and the meeting recording can be accessed at dcfloodtaskforce.org. The transcript of in meeting chat comments were incorporated in the meeting minutes provided above.