



Flood Advisory Committee

Minutes of January 28, 2009 Meeting

- **The** first meeting of 2009 for the Cranford Flood Advisory Committee (FAC) was called to order by Mark Smith at 7:50 PM in room 108 of the Cranford Municipal Building.
 - **The** following people were in attendance:
Mark C. Smith, Edward Trush, Mike Pender, Rick Marsden, Susan Marie Terra of AmeriCorps, Bob Puhak, Gregory A. Sgroi, Louis C. Lambe
 - **The Minutes of the December 1, 2008 FAC meeting** were passed out to the individuals in attendance for review, comment, and correction. A few minor changes were noted by Mr. Smith who subsequently called for a motion for their acceptance as amended. Mr. Trush offered the motion to accept which was seconded by Mr. Pender and the minutes of the December 1, 2008 meeting were accepted by the committee.
 - **The** first order of business was to select a **new secretary to record the minutes of the FAC meetings**. Mr. Smith announced that it is an FAC tradition to award this position to the unsuspecting innocent person who chooses the seat to the immediate right of the Chairperson and wears a blue shirt with a red horse and a zipper. Astonished by the remarkable coincidence that I had satisfied all of these conditions, I humbly and respectfully accepted my new responsibility without disclosing that my presence was merely inadvertent for I had thought I was at a meeting of the Planning Board. Nevertheless, one cannot buck tradition! Before I could think there was a motion and a second and I, Louis C. Lambe, was the new Secretary to the Cranford Flood Advisory Committee. After being sworn in and learning the secret handshake, I did my best to transcribe the following notes.
 - **A** Presentation of various ideas for the **Pump Station Signage** was presented by Mr. Pender. Mr. Pender offered the following four scenarios:
 1. A Plaque above the front door of the station.
 2. A Plaque at the corner of the building.
 3. A plaque on a cement monument which would be located in front of the building.
 4. A plaque mounted on a large boulder which would also be located in front of the building.
- Mr. Marsden suggested that should the committee choose either the rock or the cement monument that it be set permanently on a concrete pad. Mr. Sgroi, for whom the station is dedicated, stated that his preference would be to see it somewhere on the station itself. Mr. Smith offered to table the idea until the next meeting and asked for a motion to postpone a vote on the matter until some of the missing regular members had the opportunity to offer their suggestions and or comments. Mr. Pender graciously offered the motion to postpone a vote on the matter which was seconded by Mr. Trush.
- **Mr.** Marsden reported on the efforts of **improvement being made to the landscaping** around the pump station. He stated that the Township has transplanted several trees and bushes to the site and must now simply exercise some patience as the landscape fills in and matures.



Flood Advisory Committee

- **Mr.** Marsden reported on the **Cooperative effort of the Township and the County to restore the dike** to its original elevations. He suggested that we exercise patience and trust in the County's commitment to see this through. Mr. Trush questioned whether we should move forward and attempt to do this on our own. To which, Mr. Marsden responded that he believes that the county is not being disingenuous and reiterated the need for patience. Mr. Sgroi suggested that the Township employ the simple and economical use of cement filled sand bags to restore the dike, quickly. Mr. Marsden offered that while this idea is seemingly practical it would not be very aesthetically pleasing, giving the natural surroundings. Furthermore, the use of cement could be construed as a permanent structural improvement which would require state approval and halt the current progress. Nevertheless, Mr. Marsden acknowledges the need for improved stability for the dike and reassured Mr. Sgroi that he has worked in a more subtle stability enhancing technique in the form of honeycomb landscape reinforcement.
- **Mr.** Marsden reported on the **Phase 3 / 4 Plan** stating that we have yet to get the county's official opinion on the plan. Also, he has asked Mr. Leo Coakley to draft a tactful response to the comments offered by the County's Hydrologist. Mr. Smith concurred that the county's opinion of the plan is somewhat overdue.
- **An Update on Phase 5** – The Township has finally identified the owner of the property which would best serve as a location for the pump station needed to complete Phase 5. The owner has indicated that they are not amenable to a subdivision of the property because they have plans to knock down the existing home and construct a new one in its place. A price range of \$ 800,000-900,000 was discussed as the potential cost for such a property in Cranford. Mr. Sgroi suggested that this was a good opportunity to exercise the power of eminent domain, since the home was not currently inhabited and the improvements have not yet begun. Mr. Puhak reminded the committee that this still requires that the township offer a fair market price for the home and property and when you calculate the legal costs the price could end up in the same range. Mr. Puhak continued that if the town purchased the lot they might then want to subdivide it and resell the unused portion to pay back the purchase price, hence reducing the related cost. Also, it was suggested that the town seek the county's approval to encroach upon or even use their contiguous parcel to build the pump station. In summary, there is serious discussion, investigation, and consideration that needs to take place before the committee or any of its members would recommend the town purchase the parcel in question.
- **An Update of Funding Efforts:**
 1. Mr. Puhak reported that there was an upcoming conference call with a member of Senator Lautenberg's staff to discuss Cranford's eligibility and need for State and Tribal Assistance Grants (STAG) as well as an update on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) for which Cranford has already been authorized for \$6M and is in the appropriation phase, with no funds yet appropriated. While there are no guarantees that Cranford will receive funding, the opportunity represents the potential to fund for ½ of what is needed to complete 2B through STAG and all of 2B and more if the WRDA funds were awarded.
 2. Mr. Smith and Mr. Puhak met with former Assemblymen Guy Gregg to get a feel for what potential funding opportunities there might be within the state as well as discuss the advantages of using an effective lobbyist to open doors and create funding opportunities. Mr. Gregg's candid and trusted opinion was that the state's well is dry and grants for projects such as ours are rarely granted.
 3. Mr. Smith put a call into Congressman Lance's office to see if Cranford can get on the list for funding under the developing Stimulus Package.
 4. To that end, Mr. Marsden put together a list of 16 projects with an estimated total cost of about 6 million dollars and delivered them to the NJDEP to be considered for funding from the New Jersey Infrastructure Trust (NJEIT). The NJEIT offers no and low interest loans for such projects. Of the 16 projects, Phase 2B was the only flood related project which would qualify for consideration.



Flood Advisory Committee

- **The** National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum NFIP requirements. As a result, flood insurance premium rates are discounted to reflect the reduced flood risk resulting from the community actions meeting the three goals of the CRS:

1. Reduce flood losses; 2. Facilitate accurate insurance rating; & 3. Promote the awareness of flood insurance.

For CRS participating communities, flood insurance premium rates are discounted in increments of 5%; i.e., a Class 1 community would receive a 45% premium discount, while a Class 9 community would receive a 5% discount (a Class 10 is not participating in the CRS and receives no discount). The CRS classes for local communities are based on 18 creditable activities, organized under four categories:

1. Public Information, 2. Mapping and Regulations, 3. Flood Damage Reduction, & 4. Flood Preparedness.

Mr. Marsden stated that now that we have developed the web site, we must be diligent in our efforts to continue to meet the requirements of the NFIP if we are to ensure that the benefit to our residents is reserved.

- **The** draft of the **Hazard Mitigation Plan** is ready for review. Mr. Marsden will review the plan stating that our progress will be reported at future meetings.

- **Mr.** Leo Coakley of Hatch Mott MacDonald could not attend the meeting on account of the inclement weather and poor traveling conditions but will provide an update on the progress of re-establishing a **Rahway Basin Commission** at the next meeting.

- **Mr.** Marsden reported that when our plan for **Desilting** is approved we are ready to begin the work. He also noted that this project was included in the list of 16 submitted to the NJEIT for funding. Mr. Sgroi reported that during his recent survey, he observed deposits of masonry debris near the bridge footings on Eastman and Springfield. Mr. Marsden added that the contractor for the county should have removed this before the projects were closed and he promised to follow up with the county and report the matter. Mr. Sgroi also reported a buildup of silt near Crescent. Mr. Marsden suggests that this build up is recurring and will wash away naturally when the flow conditions change.

- **A** final **comment** was offered by Mr. Sgroi stating that in 2001 he proposed raising the spillway's elevation by 1 foot. According to Mr. Sgroi, the April 2007 storm reached an elevation of 73 feet. Also, Mr. Sgroi believes that Mr. Coakley's plan to increase the size of the orifice is a good one because we store too much water in the Lenape basin. Mr. Marsden added that it belongs to the county and they would have to approve it. Mr. Smith asked Mr. Marsden to brief Sandra Caceres-Cardenas so that she may spearhead the effort to increase the orifice. Mr. Marsden suggested that he and Mr. Coakely should draft a letter to Mr. Mineo requesting the county to consider an increase in the size of the orifice which would subsequently allow for pre-storm drainage and added storage when it is most critical. Mr. Smith will bring the matter before the township committee to approve the draft of the letter on our behalf.

- **The** meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM.