

**THE DRAFT SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON RECURRENT FLOODING AND SEA LEVEL RISE
MARCH 13, 2015**

1. Summary of the December 19, 2014 Meeting of the Special Committee on Recurrent Flooding and Sea Level Rise

The Summary of the December 19, 2014 Meeting of the Special Committee on Recurrent Flooding and Sea Level Rise was accepted as distributed.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. Dutch Dialogues

The HRPDC staff updated the Committee on the proposed Dutch Dialogues workshop. Meetings were held with six localities that offered sites for consideration: Chesapeake, Hampton, James City County, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach. The meetings were held between February 2 and March 6. Each meeting included a description of the proposed sites, discussion of water management issues affecting the sites, and other opportunities or efforts that could be tied into the workshop. 21 sites overall were considered. The next step for the process is to gather feedback from the Committee and the Dutch Embassy on which sites would work best for the workshop and then work with those involved localities to finalize the logistics for the workshop.

Mr. Ron Williams, Norfolk, stated that there is a desire for the workshop's product to be transformative and suggested dividing the proposed sites into three categories: coastal, urban downtown, and riverine. Mr. Phil Davenport, Virginia Beach, stated that the primary benefit from the workshop will be concepts, not designs, and so the lessons learned will apply to all localities.

Mr. Tom McNeilan, McNeilan and Associates, emphasized the need to respond quickly so that the Embassy does not move on.

The HRPDC staff will keep the Committee informed of developments concerning the workshop.

4. National Disaster Resilience Competition

Mr. Matthew Wall, Virginia Department of Emergency Management, briefed the Committee on the National Disaster Resilience Competition and the state's efforts to put together an application. The state has identified Hampton Roads and the Eastern Shore as its target area based on available data which demonstrates unmet need as well as its

existing and ongoing efforts. The goal of the state's approach is to "surface, test and refine the best strategies for building resilient communities across a range of environments by developing the model seaport region that derives its economic vitality from the water." The approach has five goals:

- 1) Unite the Region
- 2) Build Water Management Solutions
- 3) Create Resilience
- 4) Strengthen Vulnerable Neighborhoods
- 5) Improve Economic Vitality

The state submitted a pre-qualification letter on November 3 to HUD, which was met favorably by HUD. A public hearing was held March 10. Phase I applications are due March 27. HUD will announce which applicants have been invited to compete in Phase 2 approximately 120 days later. Once DHCD submits the state's application, it will continue to work with localities in the region to identify additional qualifying communities.

5. Regional Sea Level Rise Inundation Maps

Mr. Ben McFarlane, HRPDC, updated the Committee on the status of new sea level rise inundation maps. The grant that is funding the new maps has been extended through September 30, 2015. Maps of areas with possible tidal connections were sent out to localities for review. Draft maps should be ready by the next meeting for review by the Committee.

6. Federal Flood Risk Management Standard

The HRPDC staff briefed the Committee on Executive Order 13690 (signed January 30, 2015), which amends the federal floodplain management standard currently in place under EO 11988. The new standard applies to all federal actions, including:

- 1) Acquiring, managing, or disposing of federal lands and facilities
- 2) Providing federally undertaken, financed or assisted construction and improvements
- 3) Conducting federal activities and programs affecting land use, including but not limited to, water and related land use resource planning, regulating, and licensing activities.

The new standard encourages nature-based approaches in the development of project alternatives, provides a higher vertical elevation and wider floodplain, and provides three approaches for federal agencies to use when determining the elevation and extent of the floodplain. These approaches are:

- 1) “climate-informed science approach” (preferred)
- 2) Base flood elevation plus freeboard (2 feet for non-critical actions, 3 feet for critical actions)
- 3) 500-year flood elevation

Potential issues and concerns with the new approach include the accuracy of mapping the newly defined floodplains, a lack of certainty over which procedure will be used for which cases and by which agencies, and a lack of certainty as to how the new standard will affect federal actions such as permitting and financing.

Public comments on the draft implementation guidelines for federal agencies are due April 6, 2015.

Ms. Gayle Hicks, Hampton, stated that the new rules were too vague and that there was not accurate mapping available for all the possible new floodplains. She also stated that critical areas were not well defined and that projects should not be grandfathered.

Mr. Fred Brusso, Portsmouth, stated that the new rules were a step in the right direction. One possible issue was with how the new rules would affect federal financing. Overall, the new rules are good requirements for federal projects and for private projects that subsidized by the federal government.

7. Work Program Discussion

The HRPDC staff briefed the Committee on the discussion on sea level rise that took place during the February Commission retreat. Specific ideas discussed included advocating for funding, coordinating prioritization of mitigation/adaptation projects, improving state regulations, developing consistent regional policies, and identifying and eliminating data gaps. The HRPDC staff asked for comments by the Committee on the work program.

Mr. Sam Belfield, HRTPO, stated that he would be interested in seeing construction standards for roads that incorporate sea level rise.

Mr. Davenport suggested performing all of these tasks instead of choosing between them.

Mr. Williams suggested that all of the tasks were intertwined.

The Committee also agreed with a suggestion by the HRPDC staff to meet every other month instead of every three months.

8. Updates on University Efforts Related to Sea Level Rise and Recurrent Flooding

Ms. Marcia Berman, VIMS, briefed the Committee on several efforts the Center for Coastal Resources Management is working on. These include the sea level rise tool (part of the Comprehensive Coastal Resource Management Portal), the sea level rise risk and vulnerability model (under development), several research projects, and SB1443.

Dr. Michelle Covi, ODU, updated the Committee on the Resilient Region Reality Check and the Hampton Roads Adaptation Forum.

Mr. Roy Hoagland, W&M Law School, updated the Committee on several efforts from the Virginia Coastal Policy Clinic. These include an updated analysis of how the Dillon Rule affects local authority to address recurrent flooding and sea level rise, the legal working group for the ODU Pilot Project, and the upcoming 2-day symposium on water quality.

9. Updates on Local Efforts Related to Sea Level Rise and Recurrent Flooding

Ms. Roberts stated that Poquoson has recently received two FEMA grants and is also working a road configuration project with Hampton. The design of the new Wythe Creek Road causeway considers sea level rise.

Ms. Meg Pittenger, Portsmouth, stated that a new USGS tide monitoring station will be installed by April or May on the Route 17 Churchland Bridge over the Western Branch.

Mr. Williams suggested that the Committee look over the Corps' North Atlantic Coast Comprehensive Study. The Corps has received funding for a "3x3x3" project that will be a Norfolk-wide study. Mr. Williams also stated that "money follows money" when it comes to projects, and that the national attention on the region regarding sea level rise can be both good and bad. It will be important to leverage opportunities as they arise.

Mr. Brusso announced that the final draft of the city's new floodplain management plan will be out in the next month. It will include discussion of retreat and sea level rise.

Mr. Greg Johnson, Virginia Beach, announced that Virginia Beach has contracted with Dewberry to perform a city-wide assessment of sea level rise and flooding impacts and adaptation strategies.

10. Committee Comments

There were no additional comments from the Committee.

11. Other Matters

The next meeting of the Special Committee on Recurrent Flooding and Sea Level Rise is tentatively scheduled for June 5, 2015 at the HRPDC office in Chesapeake, Virginia. Materials will be sent in advance for review.