

(The following is not a verbatim transcript of comments or discussion that occurred during the meeting, but rather a summarization intended for general informational purposes. All motions and votes are the official records).

FLOOD COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Flood Committee was held on Monday, January 31, 2011 in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 P.M. by the Chair.

Present: Councilman Richard D. Santamaria, Jr., Chair
Councilman Emilio L. Navarro
Councilwoman Leslie A. Luciano
Michael Behm
Brian Dupont
Richard Martin

Absent: Paul Griffin

Also Present: Council President Anthony J. Lupino
Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

On motion by Councilman Navarro, seconded by Mr. Dupont, it was voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting and they stand approved as recorded. Motion passed unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- **Election of Committee Vice-Chair**

Mr. Dupont nominated Councilman Navarro as Vice-Chair. Representative Jacquard seconded the nomination. No other nominations were made. Councilman Navarro was appointed unanimously as Vice-Chair.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

PUBLIC HEARING/NEW BUSINESS

- **Presentation by RI Hope**

Lisa Cipolla and **Jason Olevski** of RI Hope appeared to give a presentation of available assistance this organization has for flood victims.

Council President Lupino asked if there are any restrictions on where RI Hope's help will extend to. Ms. Cipolla stated that her team serves Cranston and West Greenwich. They have two other teams, which serve Coventry, Warwick and West Warwick. There are no restrictions regarding geographic areas.

- **Discussion on alternative tax relief and discuss exact number of homes involved**

Senator Lanzi stated that she and the other two Senators caucused and she introduced Legislation to be forward to the RI House.

Councilman Navarro asked that the Internal Auditor and the City Council Legal Counsel, Pat Quinlan, work with the Administration, either the Tax Assessor or Finance Director, to address the tax relief issues so an Ordinance can be drafted. He asked that a report be given at the next meeting by the Administration addressing the Mayor's concerns stated in his veto message of the Ordinance he vetoed and put forward a re-drafted Ordinance. He placed this request in the form of a motion. Council President Lupino seconded the motion.

Under Discussion:

Council President Lupino stated that he has a concern that we do not have a Public Works Director at this time and once one comes on board, he would have to be brought up to speed on this issue.

Chair indicated that the Administration could not have a representative from Public Works present this evening due to the several snowstorms we have had and he asked that the report requested by Councilman Navarro be made available at the next meeting.

Motion passed unanimously.

- **Report from Senator Whitehouse's Office**

Chair presented the following information: The State received \$8.9 million in the first round of grants and Cranston received \$1.2 million. Senator Whitehouse's Office could not tell him when the second round would be sent, but the amount should be about the same. He will stay in contact with Senator Whitehouse's Office regarding this. Chair also stated that there is also money coming from the Department of Commerce. There is also Army Corps of Engineers Grant of \$178 million. As he receives information, he will forward it to the Committee members.

Senator Lanzi asked how this money is spent as far as grants. Chair stated that this is why the Administration should be present at this meeting. He asked that the Administration provide information as to the \$1,277,000 the City of Cranston received, how that was allocated and has it been spent already.

Mr. Brouillette asked how many homes would be involved in possible tax relief. Chair stated that we have not received this number from the Administration.

Councilman Navarro stated that the City Council has asked the Administration numerous times as to the number of people affected by the floods and the Administration has stated that this information is very hard to determine due to FEMA and confidentiality guidelines. Maybe we could ask again of the Administration for an assessment of how many people were displaced or were affected by the floods.

Mr. Dupont suggested possibly checking with the Fire Chief, since they were the first responders.

Chair asked that the Fire Chief provide an estimate of the number of call the Fire Department responded to for the March flood.

Councilman Navarro directed the Administration that besides the Fire Chief, the Building Official should be contacted and asked that he provide the number of notices the department issued to homes that were uninhabitable.

Chair asked that the Administration provide all the information requested this evening to the Committee prior to the next meeting.

Public Speakers:

Jane Joly, President of Riverview Terrace Condo., appeared to speak and stated that for a minimum of six months, people were not able to live in their homes and in the meantime are paying their mortgages. There are 48 units at this development and they were all affected and all displaced. There are still approximately five still displaced.

Carol Clark, 130 Fordson Ave., appeared to speak and stated that she and her husband are still displaced. They have been paying their mortgage, association fees and a sewer bill for a building they have not been in for over ten months. They were told that flood insurance money ran out before all the units were repaired. They do not know where they stand, legally.

Doris Bruno, 130 Fordson Ave., Unit 2, appeared to speak and stated that she is also still displaced. The Board of Directors of Riverview Terrace needs to work to get the rest of the units repaired so the people can get back into their homes. She just found out last week that the Board of Directors has run out of money to repair the remainder of the units. She is very disappointed in the lack of communication between the Board of Directors and the homeowners.

Mr. Behm suggested that the residents contact RI Housing and look into the “Hardest Hit Funds” as another resource that they offer.

Ms. Bruno questioned what is being done to avoid this problem in the future, as to reconstructing homes.

Senator Lanzi stated that CCAP should also be contacted by the residents for resources.

Val Dobrushkin, 132 Fordson Ave., appeared to speak and asked questions regarding the NRCS project at Aqueduct Field. He also indicated that there is yellowish brown water coming out of his pipes in his home.

Patrick Marr, 126 Davis Ave., appeared to speak and stated that Providence Water has gone to the area twice to shut off the mains, but the colored water is water coming up out of the storm drains.

Marty Madden, 131 Fordson Ave., Board of Directors member of Riverview Terrace, appeared to speak and stated that as to the flood insurance money being spent, nothing was ever done without the direction of the attorney, contractor or the management company. They are doing everything they can to help everyone.

Danielle Marterusi appeared to speak and stated that she lives off Fletcher Ave. She has not been directly affected by floods in the past, but her home was damaged by the last flood and caused a great deal of hardship.

Senator Lanzi stated that the Fletcher Ave. problem is due to the developments upstream, in Johnston, such as big box stores. Johnston needs to work together with Cranston for mitigation efforts because this problem is not going to get better or go away. Maybe this Committee should meet with representatives from Johnston to discuss this.

Mr. Martin stated that Fletcher Ave. is a State road with a State river and the question becomes, what is the State going to do about it. When there is a flood, Cranston has a Cranston Police Officer present and not a State trooper. He also questioned what happened to the \$10 million Bond Issue that was passed in 2008 and why we are not funding it and if we did, where was it used.

Rosemary Portukalian, 40 Kingwood Ave., appeared to speak and stated that she purchased the home in 1986 and she never had any water in her home until the last few floods. She lives near the softball field off Atwood Ave. and the back area of the field behind George J. Peters is like a swamp. Her home faces this swampy area. She had a meeting with the Mayor’s Office a few times and they were cancelled. DEM told her it is the City’s problem. Chair asked that the Clerk find out the status of this for the next meeting.

Chair indicated that Mr. Griffin has resigned as a member and if anyone is interested in serving on this Committee, this position is available. This position is a stakeholder’s position.

Chair announced that the next meeting of this Committee will be Monday, March 14th. There will be no meeting in February, since it is a short month.

Mr. Dupont asked that the following be provided from the Administration for the next meeting:

- Flood Preparedness – is there a plan currently in place alerting residents, such as sand bags or help to the elderly?
- Communications with Johnston, Providence Water Supply Board, who handles the Scituate Dam? During one of the floods, this dam was left open and millions and millions of gallons of water went into the river.
- Possible Tax Abatement – if this does not pass at the State level, we could possibly explore a tax relief effort through the possibility of Zoning by establishing Flood Relief Zoning Districts, similar to like an Exemption. This would not require State approval and would give some type of relief to the taxpayer.

Council President Lupino stated that the City Council recently passed a Hazard Mitigation Plan, which he believes is posted online.

Stan Honorskin, 131 Fordson Ave., appeared to speak and asked questions regarding the Aqueduct Field project and questioned who the project manager is of this project. Councilman Navarro asked that Mr. Honorskin contact the City Planner, since Planning had to approve this project.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees