

Thurston County Flood Planning Committee Meeting Notes



Monday, April 24, 2017 – 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Thurston Regional Planning Council – 2424 Heritage Court SW, Olympia, WA

Conference Room A

Present: Pat Allen, Paul Brewster, Tris Carlson, Howard Glastetter, Andrew Kinney, Mark Maurer, Allison Osterberg, Meghan Porter, Tim Rubert, Robert Scott, Trevin Taylor, Alan Vanell, and George Walter

Absent: Scott Boetcher and Glen Connelly



1. Introductions

Paul Brewster, Senior Planner, Thurston Regional Planning Council, facilitated the meeting. The committee members introduced themselves and provided a brief description of their personal and/or professional experience with flooding.

2. Overview of Planning Process

Paul Brewster presented an outline of the *Thurston County Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan* update process (the PowerPoint presentation will be accessible from the project website in the next two weeks). Planner Brewster emphasized that the plan update must be completed and adopted by the Thurston County Board of Commissioners by October 1, 2017. This date coincides with the county's next Community Rating System recertification visit. Paul's presentation covered:

- The federal disaster declarations related to flooding in Thurston County

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- The “high” flood risk rating quantified by both the Thurston County Hazard Inventory and Vulnerability Assessment (HIVA) and in the Hazards Mitigation Plan for the Thurston Region
- Differentiating flood mitigation from preparedness and response efforts
- The benefits of developing a flood plan
- Federal Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grant Programs (75% federal funding with 25% local share)
- Outline of the *Community Rating System Coordinator’s Manual* (Section 510) 10-step planning process
- The role of the Thurston County Flood Planning Committee
- All committee meetings are open to the public
- The timeline for the planning process
- The planning process’s five Guiding Principles
- A summary of the type of flood hazard initiatives in the current flood plan
- The Focus Areas of the plan update
 - Incorporate new data
 - Evaluate losses and risk
 - Update mitigation strategy
 - Engage community
 - Meet CRS requirements

2. Overview of Planning Process (continued)

Pat Allen, Civil Engineer, Thurston County, presented an overview of the National Flood Insurance Program’s (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS). Pat is Thurston County’s CRS Coordinator and explained that the county must document and account for all its flood management program activities. The CRS program is voluntary and provides incentives in the form of flood insurance discounts to policy holders in the 100-year special flood hazard area. The goals of CRS are to:

1. Reduce and avoid flood damage to insurable property
2. Strengthen and support the insurance aspects of the NFIP
3. Foster comprehensive floodplain management

Thurston County is only one of six communities throughout the United States that has received a Class 1 or 2 rating. As a Class 2 community, eligible flood insurance policy holders receive a 40 percent discount on their flood insurance premiums. Pat estimates this is about a net \$120,000 savings to affected policy holders in the county. The presentation highlighted the various CRS activities the county reports on:

- 300 Series, Public Information
- 400 Series, Mapping and Regulations
- 500 Series, Flood Damage Reduction Activities
- 600 Series, Warning and Response

For the county to maintain a Class 4 or better community rating, it must achieve 50 percent of credit for the following three planning steps:

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- Step 2 – Involve the Public
- Step 5 – Assess the Problem
- Step 8 – Draft an Action Plan

The committee members discussed how the county's CRS program is implemented and administered by a combination of staff from various departments including staff from both the Planning Department and Water Resources within Resource Stewardship, and staff from Thurston County Emergency Management within Emergency Services.

Pat clarified that Thurston County considers all of FEMA's mapped 100-year special flood hazard areas, the county's high groundwater hazard areas, and flood of record areas equally as flood hazard areas for regulating permitting for construction and all other landuse activities.

3. Flood Planning Committee Guidelines

Paul Brewster explained the purpose of the *Thurston County Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan Flood Planning Committee Guidelines*. The guidelines include information about the composition of the committee, its purpose, responsibilities, meeting norms, facilitation, and decision making and conflict resolution.

The committee members requested the following modifications:

1. Correct the spelling of Alan Vanell and Mark Maurer.
2. Include Robert Scott
3. Change Allison's auspices from Thurston County "Planning Department" to "Resource Stewardship."
4. Add a guideline for the members to have the option to nominate a spokesperson, by consensus, to represent the committee as necessary. If there is consensus among the committee members, a volunteer or nominee may speak on behalf of the committee to the Board of County Commissioners, at a flood plan public meeting, or another flood plan related event.

Paul Brewster agreed to make the four adjustments, and as such, the committee approved the amended guidelines.

4. Meeting Schedule Date Selection

All Flood Planning Committee meetings are open to the public. Meetings will be held from 2-4 p.m. in Conference Room A at Thurston Regional Planning Council. The committee agreed to the following meeting dates (all Wednesdays):

- May 17
- June 7
- June 21
- July 19
- August 23

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The first public open house meeting is scheduled for May 25 from 6-8 p.m. The location to be determined. Future meeting date appointment emails will be sent to members and will be published on www.trpc.org.

5. Group Discussion

A two-question group exercise was planned for the meeting. Committee members were asked to answer to answer the following questions and share their responses with others:

1. What do you think is Thurston County's greatest flood vulnerability?
2. What do you think is the most impactful action the county can take to mitigate flood hazards?

Due to time constraints, the members could only answer and share their responses for the first question. Below is a short summary of the information shared:

- Urban flooding
- High groundwater flooding
- Floods resulting from roads and impervious surfaces and the cost of maintenance of transportation facilities
- Concerns with I-5 acting as a barrier to flood waters and subsequently inundating the lower valley during extreme flood events
- Groundwater flooding that may be associated with unofficial drainage management practices
- Lake and river flooding
- Tacoma Power's Alder Lake Reservoir management practices and the potential for adverse impacts on downstream properties
- The potential for floodwaters to discharge into industrial areas and become contaminated
- Concerns over the long-term safety and fate of the Skookumchuck Reservoir and Dam when TransAlta vacates its operations in Lewis County. Who will become responsible for maintaining it? Who will pay for it?
- The impacts of nuisance flooding on the transportation network and its impact to fire and emergency medical services response time level of service
- Riverine and stream flooding is more frequent and climate change is likely to increase the rate of such flood events
- The probability of monstrous outlier flood events that is likely missing from the historic records. The 100-year flood events are insufficient for designing for future capacity. The recent California flood impacts to the Oroville Dam may be a precursor to the potential for catastrophic failure of dams under such low-probability high-consequence events.

6. Homework Assignment

Paul Brewster requested members review a draft community flood survey. The survey will be published online community members will receive a postcard with the survey link and a public meeting notification. Paper copies will be sent, upon request, to people who do not have internet access. TRPC, Thurston County, and other planning partners will also broadcast the survey notice via social media, email, and other means. Paul asked committee members to

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consider what information the county should collect from survey respondents to ascertain their understanding of flood risks, what actions they have taken to mitigate or prepare for floods, what actions they believe the county should take to reduce flood hazards, and what information they find useful in the flood bulletin. Members were tasked to review the questions and email their suggestions and comments to Paul by Thursday, May 4 (brewstp@trpc.org).

Members were also asked to review the current flood plan's goals and objectives (Chapter 8) in preparation for the May 17 meeting. A copy of the goals and objectives were included in the meeting materials, but can also be viewed online:

(<http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/planning/natural-res/docs/flood-plan.pdf>).

7. Public Comments

No members of the public attended.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.