

King County Flood Hazard Management Plan Update Citizen's Committee Meeting # 1

MINUTES

DECEMBER 13, 2011

MERCER ISLAND COMMUNITY AND EVENT CENTER

FACILITATOR	Tamie Kellogg, Kellogg Consulting Inc.
NOTE TAKER	Melissa Plotsky/Priscilla Kaufmann
ATTENDING	Leonard Carlson, Bob Freitag, Dave Gashler, Warren Halverson, Joe Herr, John King, Molly Lawrence, James McBride, Martha Parker, Gilbert Pauley, Susan Pelaez, Jeff Randall, Stephen Stanley, Keith Swensen, Joseph Wartman, Brian Winslow – Staff: Steve Bleifuhs, John Engel, Priscilla Kaufmann, Tamie Kellogg, Clint Loper, Brian Murray, Jennifer Rice, Jeanne Stypula
NOT ATTENDING	Nicole Hagestad, Jon Scholes

AGENDA TOPICS

5 MINUTES	WELCOME AND STAFF INTRODUCTIONS	STEVE BLEIFUHS
DISCUSSION	Steve Bleifuhs welcomed meeting attendees and thanked them for participating, briefly introduced the purpose of the meeting, and introduced the roles and responsibilities of each King County staff member participating in the meeting.	
40 MINUTES	CITIZENS COMMITTEE ROUNDTABLE INTRODUCTIONS	TAMIE KELLOGG
DISCUSSION	Tamie Kellogg facilitated as each Committee Member and General Public attendee introduced themselves and gave a brief, two-minute bio explaining their individual backgrounds, previous Flood Plan involvement, and interest in floodplain management.	
5 MINUTES	MATERIALS OVERVIEW	PRISCILLA KAUFMANN
DISCUSSION	Priscilla Kaufmann went over the all materials handed out, explained where to find information (resource electronic and hard copy), went over the schedule and invited people to email or call her with any unanswered questions or concerns.	
15 MINUTES	CITIZENS COMMITTEE CHARTER	TAMIE KELLOGG
DISCUSSION	<p>Tamie Kellogg highlighted the important charter information and noted the differences between this planning process and the last Flood Plan Update process (e.g., minimized scope, sounding board at key milestones vs. consensus among all participants). She also explained the importance of gathering diverse opinions and reactions to the ideas and concepts put forward in the discussions and how the 10-point planning process applies to agenda items. She asked that people take the time to review materials and information in advance of meetings in light of the time limitations for meetings and tight timeline overall; noted the requirement of participants to attend a public meeting on the Flood Plan, described her role as facilitator and explained the process for documenting and distributing notes.</p> <p>Additionally, she proposed the following ground rules not in the Charter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start and end on all meetings on time. Meetings to start at 5:00 and end promptly at 8:00pm. • One person may talk at a time. Raise your hand to be recognized. • Conversations may need to be cut off, but will be recorded in the notes. Committee members can also email comments and share information with Priscilla and Brian. • Notes will not attribute Committee Member names to statements; if you want a statement attributed, let Priscilla know. 	
60 MINUTES	SCOPE OF WORK AND SCHEDULE/OVERVIEW OF 2006 KING COUNTY FLOOD HAZARD MANAGEMENT PLAN/ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE 2006/KING COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT	BRIAN MURRAY

DISCUSSION	<p>Brian gave an overview of the King County Flood Hazard Management Plan, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the purposes for updating the Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ new information ○ policy issues ○ incomplete and new actions • an overview of new information since last plan • the timeline for the Plan Update • issues to be addressed in the Update • tools and mapping • funding • governance structure • evaluation process <p>He also stressed the importance of Committee Member feedback throughout the process, and described the focus and key questions for each of the Plan's multiple areas.</p>
QUESTIONS/COMMENTS	KING COUNTY RESPONSE
<p>Committee Member Question: If we get to May and we're having a challenge getting an opportunity to discuss things as they need to be discussed, are we locked into the September deadline?</p>	<p>I would not say that we're locked in. I think there are opportunities. I can't speak for the Board of Supervisors, but my impression is that they are more concerned that we have time to give this due diligence. [Brian Murray]</p>
<p>Committee Member Comment: I am a little concerned because some of these issues are not small issues. I'm bringing it up so that if we do need more time, we understand that we're not locked in.</p>	<p>So, you're proposing that as we go forward that we consistently assess the process to see where we're at and consider the potential for an extension, should the need arise? [Tamie Kellogg]</p>
<p>Committee Member Comment: Last time we did add meetings because material was added that we felt needed to be discussed. I think the current timeframe is ambitious.</p>	
<p>Committee Member Comment: I think that instead of trying to extend the termination date, we should just add more meetings. If we have an issue that is unresolved, we can add another meeting – or, perhaps, we can have sub-meetings and meetings on other topics.</p>	
<p>Committee Member Comment: Last year our focus was different. This time we are more of a sounding board, when last time we were working toward consensus. If we don't have that, it may be easier this time.</p>	
<p>Committee Member Question: As I was reading through this information, it looks as if there is some fairly significant discussion and concern about budgets and what is and isn't funded. Is that something to be included in our discussions?</p>	<p>In regard to the capitol project delivery, it is something we will be discussing, but not in a lot of detail. Essentially, we'll be looking at our expenditure rate and how well we're progressing with our capital projects. [Brian Murray]</p>
	<p>I think it's worth pointing out that last time we were writing a new plan and starting pretty much from scratch. This is an update, so we're not going back to square one again. [Priscilla Kaufmann]</p>
<p>Committee Member Question: On the slide about Risk Tolerance, when you look at the Green River and the Howard Hanson Dam Levee, they're talking about the risk of the levee itself, not necessarily the risk of flooding down below the levee. The Corps generally takes the attitude that if they spill water, they protect the levee and the levee has served its purpose. I think that 140 Year refers to the protection of the levee, not necessarily the spilling of the water. Does that make sense?</p>	<p>My understanding of that is that the current capacity of the Dam is the storage for the 140 year event, and so you've got basically a 19% chance of over topping those levees over a thirty-year period. We've talked a lot about the fact that the dam has been repaired, but it's important to keep in mind that back in 2006 they were looking at a level of protection that was greater than this (the 500-year flood). There will be some changed assumptions that we'll be</p>

	<p>discussing when we get into our risk assessment. [Brian Murray]</p>
<p>Committee Member Question: I have a question on the base flood elevations – I understand there are two of them, that King County has two base flood elevation criteria. Is that normal? Does FEMA recognize them? Why are there two?</p>	<p>If you know anything about datums, you know there are two ways that you can start at zero. One of them was set in 1988 and the one prior to that was set in 1929. Basically, that's two different ways of saying where we start at zero – and they are correlated to each other. In the 1988 data, it's about 3.5 or 4 feet higher than in 1929.</p> <p>The new satellites that are flying around went and actually re-measured the Earth's surface. When they went through that process in the 1980s, they set a new datum so that all the new digital information could be correlated to that datum. FEMA has now switched to the 1988 data. All the new FEMA and flood insurance rate maps used to be correlated to the 1929 datum – and now they have switched to the 1988 datum.</p> <p>All the new flood studies that were done in King County were based on the 1988 datum. FEMA's maps were still in the 1929 datum and now FEMA has caught up with us. [Jeanne Stypula]</p>
<p>Committee Member Question: If FEMA gets the levee analysis fixed up, is the county going to spend the money to update the maps after that? It's a relevant question, if only because we're looking at a plan that will be good for six years, and if we don't think FEMA is actually going to update their maps for six years that may change which standard we decide to target.</p>	<p>I think the devil is in the details and when they start giving us more information about the types of methodologies and what they're looking for, we're going to have to go back and reassess about which existing flood study we can do to gain some quick repair to get it up to that methodology.</p> <p>Other river systems might be more complex and more expensive and I think we'd like to have a conversation with FEMA about the case for that – if it was studies that the county already funded. [Jeanne Stypula]</p>
<p>Committee Member Question: Are we going to look at off channel solutions to reduce flooding?</p>	<p>That is not a specific subject area, but it will come up in some of the individual basin plans that we discuss. [Brian Murray]</p>
<p>Committee Member Question: How about the sandbags on the Green River – are those going to stay up forever? Is that going to be a topic of discussion – funding, recreational viewpoint, and whatnot?</p>	<p>That's also another hot topic that's being discussed right now and in the next couple of months with the Advisory Committee. The intent is to be able to remove those sandbags at some point this spring. It's currently unclear who exactly is going to pay for it. It's not something that will be covered here. (Brian Murray)</p>
<p>Committee Member Question: You said we could send emails to Priscilla if we wanted to make further comments – what happens to them?</p>	<p>Priscilla will read and respond to them. Brian is supervising a team of people who are working behind the scenes to develop the issue papers, the materials they'll have for you, the way in which topics are going to be discussed. They will look at and consider all issues and information coming before the committee. [Tamie Kellogg]</p> <p>I think when all is said and done, the intent</p>

	<p>is to have a compilation of comments from this group, as well as any other comments we receive from outside of the committee. The first question from the Advisory Committee is always, "What did the Citizens Committee think and why did they feel that way?" They highly value your input. [Brian Murray]</p>
<p>Committee Member Question: Do you anticipate any of the technical managers related to the individual basins speaking to this group?</p>	<p>I sure do. In just a few minutes, even. I meant to say this in the intro, but we'll have folks providing information on each of the basins tonight that know each of the issues much more closely. We'll also be bringing in professionals and specialists to each meeting to provide in-depth information on the issues we'll be covering. [Brian Murray]</p>
<p>Committee Member Question: I'm looking at "Risk Reduction Strategies and Basin Wide Action Plans" in the Charter. So, the group will not be discussing any sort of work that could be done outside of the stream and levee system itself, in regards to some of these storm water work that's being done presently? There's a lot of innovative stuff that's being done.</p>	<p>I think that's going to be part of that discussion. Our focus is generally on the major rivers and the levees, but we know that the flooding problem we're dealing with is connected with what goes on in the rest of the basin – especially low-impact development techniques as part of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Those are topics that are very much on our minds and I think it will be part of the discussion. [Brian Murray]</p>
<p>Committee Member Question: I heard that there's a new lawsuit against FEMA?</p>	<p>Yes, I mentioned that there is a lawsuit against FEMA and there is actually another one out there. The National Flood Insurance Program is the national FEMA program that sets minimum standards around floodplain management. And, each one of the jurisdictions that take part in the National Flood Insurance Program has to comply with it. Basically, if you want get federally backed insurance in your community, you have to take part in the National Flood Insurance Program. It's more complicated than that, but there was a lawsuit filed a few years ago by the National Wildlife Federation saying that this program had not consulted under the Endangered Species Act and that by encouraging development in floodplains it was causing a threat to endangered species. Over the last couple of years, FEMA has been consulting and the National Marine Fisheries Service produced a BiOp spelling out what FEMA needed to do to be complaint with the Endangered Species Act. What that exactly means and how local governments are or are not on the hook to try to implement the provisions set out by the National Marine Fisheries has been a very confusing topic. And, the latest salvo in this discussion is that the National Wildlife Federation, who originally filed the lawsuit back in 2004 or something, have now filed another lawsuit saying that the way FEMA has implemented the program is not nearly sufficient... and that was just a couple of days ago. [Brian Murray]</p>

<p>Committee Member Comment: Quickly, on the lawsuit issue: later this week or sometime this month, the National Wildlife Federation is planning to file a motion for preliminary injunction to suspend the sale of flood insurance under the NFIP until FEMA implements the bi-op that they think is appropriate. They were successful and got an injunction in Florida, so it could become an issue if you're going to buy flood insurance going forward.</p>	
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10 MINUTES	<p>RIVER BASIN OVERVIEW AND RISK REDUCTION STRATEGIES: SOUTH FORK SKYKOMISH, SNOQUALMIE, TOLT, RAGING RIVERS</p>	CLINT LOPER
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DISCUSSION	<p>Clint gave a high-level overview of the characteristics, flood risks, and flood mitigation strategies for managing the Snoqualmie/South Fork Skykomish Basin. He discussed the successes of mitigation techniques, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buyouts and home elevations • farm pads and barn elevations • mapping and monitoring flood warning gauges • flood hazard education within the communities affected <p>He also discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fill issues associated with the use farm pads • the use of FEMA and state grants for funding buyouts and home elevations • the importance of focusing on redesigning the floodplain infrastructure over focusing on repairs.
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QUESTIONS/COMMENTS	KING COUNTY RESPONSE
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<p>Committee Member Question: Do you have a sense of the value of all of that property?</p>	<p>I don't know it off the top of my head, but I do know that when we looked at it – I think it was for the 100 Year flood – it was in the \$30 to \$35 million range, but that included some assumptions about which ones we could buy out and which ones could be mitigated through elevations. That was more like the overall program needs to successfully mitigate the flooding, so it could have been a lot of home elevations. [Clint Loper] Note: The cost would be approximately \$32 million to acquire 12 homes and elevate 315 homes.</p>
<p>Committee Member Question: You refer to the county, not the City of Snoqualmie. Did that map include the City of Snoqualmie?</p>	<p>That map did include the City of Snoqualmie. Much of this is in the City of Snoqualmie. There's also some that's Unincorporated. This Upper Snoqualmie project, in particular, is very much a partnership with funding from the King County Flood District and trying to leverage grant money from FEMA. There's also a very close working relationship with the City of Snoqualmie and Unincorporated King County. We look at the flood risks across all three of those jurisdictions. [Clint Loper]</p>
<p>Committee Member Question: How many acres are there in the lower Snoqualmie valley floodplain area, say from Fall City to the county line?</p>	<p>Note: There are 11,133 acres in the Lower Snoqualmie floodplain. If you add the floodplains of Cherry and Patterson Creeks and the Tolt and Ragin Rivers, there are 13,848 acres.</p>

Committee Member Question: When you buy somebody out, do you buy them out at fair market value prior to them being flooded or after they're flooded? Obviously the property isn't worth as much after it's flooded. And, in that case, if you make an offer and the owner says they don't want to move, is that when you elevate their house? The other question is, I was just looking at the before and after of your elevated house [in the PowerPoint slide] and I can't see any difference.

The thing is that here a lot of times the change occurs underneath the house and there's a façade that's put back on to try and make it fit back in to the neighborhood. Six feet would not be an unusual home elevation here. If you go back to the 500 Year map, we're having discussions about how high is high enough. In this case, the difference between the 100 and the 500 Year happens to be about four feet. So, if the elevation is for the 100 Year, is that wise? Or, should we go even higher, given that most of the investment is in the structural foundation? Once you're elevating, to go an extra foot or two really doesn't make much of a difference cost-wise.

When it comes to buyouts, we always do fair market value. With fair market value of a house that has already been damaged, there is a stipulation where we can do an appraisal that looks at the appraised value before the damages. I can't remember what FEMA's term is for that. [Clint Loper]
Note: The term is "pre-event value."

Committee Member Question: I had a question about reducing risk. When they took the dam out of Snoqualmie Falls, was this plan in effect?

King County had no permitting authority over the dam removal. All of the work that we're doing here is being done in the context of some of the hydrologic changes but I think we have found that the PSE project is unlikely to have a significant impact downstream. I know there are a lot of opinions in the community around that, but it would be the whole subject of a meeting, I think. [Clint Loper]

Committee Member Question: Without getting into a lot of depth, could you just share with us a little bit about the levee repair as it relates to your action plans that suggest they go from 2007 to 2016. I believe that the \$5 million is in there and that you have the money to pay for this. And, where are we in terms of doing the planning – and actually the implementation of fixing that up? And, where are we in the timeframe? (South Fork Levee)

Great question. Due to the pace of flooding over the past five years, some of our energy has been diverted to doing repairs and responding to the flooding. Some of the longer term planning that we've designed is moving a little slower than we would like, but I think we'll make some traction on that now. That particular one is in the alternatives investigation. The timeframe right now is a couple of years. We've done some repairs along the way, but the current thinking is that we'll start doing construction in 2013 or 2014. [Clint Loper]

Committee Member Question: Are you doing any work on streams at all? Are streams really relevant in terms of flood planning?

The flood planning that our workgroup does is river related. We have a separate funding source that's called the Opportunity Fund that is very often used for stream work and is at a lower jurisdiction level, so Unincorporated King County uses some of it. [Clint Loper]

<p>Committee Member Question: What's your relationship to cities in terms of the planning process?</p>	<p>One of the issues that comes up is this discussion around how much we hold cities to the policies in the plan. The current state statute says that cities within King County shall adopt the plan within 120 or 180 days or something like that (it's documented with the King County Council). To my knowledge, the Department of Ecology is responsible for implementing that. Note: Within 120 days per RCW 86.12.210.</p> <p>If we do set some sort of recommended set of development regulations, like we have in the current plan for Unincorporated King County, to what extent does that extend to other cities and, what are the incentives for them to adopt the regulations? [Brian Murray]</p>
<p>Committee Member Comment: A quick observation: Almost all of the presentation has been about what has been done with the money on the levees and buyouts and that sort of thing – and I don't mean this as a criticism – but the point of it is getting ahead, as you said, in the planning process. How do we stop the whole problem in the first place? I would be interested in our prioritization of money, expenditures, perhaps with some of that money going to incentivize these areas -- and the urban areas, in particular -- to doing the things that are necessary to keep that water up there.</p>	

10 MINUTES	RIVER BASIN OVERVIEW AND RISK REDUCTION STRATEGIES: SAMMAMISH, CEDAR RIVERS, ISSAQUAH CREEK	JOHN ENGEL
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DISCUSSION	<p>John gave an overview of flood risks, flood mitigation strategies, and current and upcoming projects in the Cedar/Sammamish Watershed. He noted that the focus of flood risk reduction activities was on buyouts of repetitive loss properties, erosion, and protecting fiber optic lines. He also discussed the dredging project on the Cedar River that the county is working on along with the city of Renton, and gave a brief overview of the acquisition and river restoration projects in Rainbow Bend.</p>
QUESTIONS/COMMENTS	KING COUNTY RESPONSE
<p>Committee Member Question: What was the effect on the people downstream once you did the dredging?</p>	<p>The river goes into Lake Washington, just a little further downstream, so there was no real effect on the community. [John Engel]</p>
<p>Committee Member Question: The dredging was done in 2000, at the mouth of the Cedar and after that a Muckleshoot tribe came to a Cedar River council meeting and complained that it was over-dredged. I don't know what happened as a result of that. But because of the dredging, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife required Renton to place gravel at Landsburg way upstream near Mile 22 for ten years. After the January 2009 flood, people in the neighborhood downstream from there came to the Cedar River council meetings and complained that there was too much gravel, that they were getting flooded. How do we stop this?</p>	<p>Thank you. We'll be talking about tools and strategies next time and will have this issue cued up. [Tamie Kellogg]</p>
<p>Committee Member Question: I guess I was just trying to understand this as the whole interrelationship between the city, county and, in this case, the lower Cedar Corps of Engineers. I think the lower Cedar project was initially a Corps/City project and so, from what we were talking about before, there's this 10% money that they can get, but it seems to me that we want a system-wide process, you don't want this piecemeal. Is the county getting more involved in that?</p>	<p>Yes. The Flood Plan identifies everything as a capital project, so there's direct money coming from the District for that work. We'll be meeting in January with the City to work out some of the details on that, in terms of who and what. We are having some say going forward. [John Engel]</p>

10 MINUTES	RIVER BASIN OVERVIEW AND RISK REDUCTION STRATEGIES: GREEN RIVER	JENNIFER RICE
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DISCUSSION	Jennifer gave an overview of the characteristics of the Green River Basin, the Howard Hanson Dam and the areas extensive levee system. She explained the importance of flood risk reduction in terms of the potential economic damage to the area, should risk reduction initiatives fail. She described the status of current containment projects, capital projects, levee repairs, engineering design projects, and acquisition activity in the area. She also outlined the county's efforts in working with FEMA, the cities of Kent, Auburn and Tukwila, and the Corps of Engineers to meet project goals.
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QUESTIONS/COMMENTS	KING COUNTY RESPONSE
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<p>Committee Member Comment: In terms of risk, there is risk in terms of the levee itself, the dam itself and what level of risk is acceptable for the dam, which level of risk is acceptable for the control structure below the dam, and which level of risk is acceptable for the overbank area and the floodplain in other areas. I don't think we should have as a goal to put all water shoved between the corridor, even in the area that is as highly developed as that. I think we should look at it from all of those levels of safety, not just the one or two.</p>	
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<p>Committee Member Comment: In 1994, the Corps of Engineers started a 50-year program to add woody debris and tons of gravel to the Green River at a point not very far below the dam. I just wanted people to be aware of that program.</p>	
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10 MINUTES	RIVER BASIN OVERVIEW AND RISK REDUCTION STRATEGIES: WHITE RIVER	JEANNE STYPULA
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DISCUSSION	Jeanne outlined the unique characteristics of the White River Basin (as the only glacial fed basin in county) and outlined current flood protection and risk reduction strategies, including the City of Pacific temporary flood protection project and the levee setback projects. She also discussed the need to allow the river more room to flow in terms of both sediment and water, and briefly described the studies in conjunction with USGS that are currently underway (or planned for the near future) in order to better guide future projects.
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QUESTIONS/COMMENTS	KING COUNTY RESPONSE
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<p>Committee Member Question: Can you go back two slides? You talk about the situation, about the flooding up to that little access road. That is a good thing. Because that area floods, downstream doesn't flood.</p>	<p>Yes, the strategy here is to buy out those homes. [Jeanne Stypula]</p>
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<p>Committee Member Question: I thought the White River was diverted into Lake Tapps for flood reasons?</p>	<p>You're right. They're not pulling off as much water as they used to. [Jeanne Stypula]</p>
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20 MINUTES	GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS/PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING	TAMIE KELLOGG/BRIAN MURRAY
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DISCUSSION	<p>Brian informed the Committee of King County's desire to do whatever they can to answer Committee questions or provide resource and foundational materials. He also noted that staff would begin to put together a comparison of flood regulations by jurisdiction, so that the Committee can see what the King County code calls for in relation to incorporated areas.</p> <p>Tamie informed the Committee that they will receive a packet of information via mail on January 5th regarding all of the tools to be discussed at the next meeting, as well as information on lessons learned, goals and objectives, and guiding principles.</p>
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QUESTIONS/COMMENTS	KING COUNTY RESPONSE
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<p>General Public Question (Katherine G.): I've done a lot of work with agriculture. I thought what was interesting was when everyone was talking about the number of homes that they've elevated. I was wondering, what is the number that is left to elevate?</p>	<p>Note: Work in the Upper Snoqualmie helps to answer that question in one area, and we are currently working on similar analysis in other river basins.</p>
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