



King County
Flood Control Zone Advisory Committee
Meeting Report
May 17, 2007

Meeting Attendees

Committee Members

Richard Bonewits, King County Unincorporated Area Councils
Councilmember Tim Clarke, City of Kent
Councilmember Dan Clawson, City of Renton
Mayor Grant Degginger, City of Bellevue
Councilmember Mike Flowers, City of Carnation
Mayor Ron Hansen, City of Shoreline
Mayor Kenneth Hearing, City of North Bend
Mayor Laure Iddings, City of Maple Valley
Mayor Matt Larson, City of Snoqualmie
Mayor Pete Lewis, City of Auburn
Deputy Mayor Joan McBride, City of Kirkland
Mayor Steve Mullet, City of Tukwila
Executive Ron Sims, King County

King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Water and Land Resources Division Staff

Presenters:

Mark Isaacson, Division Director
Sandy Kilroy, Regional Services Section Manager
Steve Bleifuhs, River and Floodplain Management Unit Supervisor

Others in attendance:

Pam Bissonnette, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks
Joanna Richey, Deputy Director, Water and Land Resources Division
Grover Cleveland, Special Projects, Department of Natural Resources and Parks
Brian Murray, Program Manager, Water and Land Resources Division

Committee Staff

Margaret Norton-Arnold, Facilitator
Emily Taylor, Administrative Assistant

Meeting Summary

This was the first meeting of the King County Flood Control Zone Advisory Committee. At this meeting, Committee members introduced themselves and

provided a brief history of their jurisdiction's interest and experience in flood control. King County staff presented information about the Flood Control Plan, the types of projects that could be funded, and the role of the Advisory Committee. Members discussed their issues and questions related to the newly-established Flood Control Zone District.

Introductions

Margaret Norton-Arnold welcomed the group and provided an overview of the structure and scope of the Committee's work over the summer. Ron Sims thanked members for their participation and reminded them that the Committee's recommendations must be submitted to the King County Council by August 31 of this year.

Each member introduced him or herself and provided the group with background information of their interest in being part of the committee. Most members support the idea of a County-wide flood control district, highlighting the flooding problems they have experienced and emphasizing the importance of better flood control protection to the region's economy. A few members have questions about funding sources and the overall level of taxation, and believe cities that are less prone to flooding should pay less than those located within the floodplain.

Flood Control Zone Plan

King County staff used a PowerPoint presentation to describe an overview of flood problems in King County, the Flood Control Zone District process and work plan, and proposed capital projects. The role of the Advisory Committee was explained. All committee members were provided with a paper copy of the presentation.

Committee Questions and Discussion

After the presentation, members of the committee asked questions and provided their comments:

- Members asked questions about the expected increase of flooding in King County. A University of Washington study finds that King County is likely to experience different weather patterns due to climate change. These weather patterns will likely include torrential rainstorms that could increase flooding to such an extent that existing flood control infrastructure will be unable to contain flood waters. Some members noted that their jurisdictions had already experienced the impact of these changing weather patterns.
- There was a brief discussion to clarify the membership and role of the Basin Technical Committees. These five committees represent the five major watershed areas in King County. Generally the committees are made up of jurisdictional staff such as public works directors and senior staff of cities included in the watershed area; a King County rivers basin lead as well as Brian Murray, the King County staff member responsible for providing coordination between the Basin Technical Committees and the Flood Control Zone Advisory Committee. The Basin Committees will take a lead role in selection and

- prioritization of projects; their meeting minutes will be posted on the internet and the Advisory Committee will be regularly apprised of their work.
- An Advisory Committee member recommended that these Basin Committees coordinate with salmon recovery efforts already in place through the WRIA processes.
 - In response to a question, Ron Sims said he would contact the Corps of Engineers to determine how they might want to be informed and involved in the implementation of Flood Control Zone District projects.
 - The role of FEMA was briefly discussed. King County works closely with FEMA in implementing the Floodplain Management Program.
 - A committee member urged King County to coordinate these projects with the ongoing work of the WRIAs. Some of the projects appear to be identical, and coordination will eliminate competition between agencies for funding. Projects identified in both flood control and salmon restoration plans should be noted.
 - Climate change is a very important issue and it would be helpful to have more information. Richard Palmer, a UW scientist who has been working for King County on climate change, will be invited to make a presentation to the Committee at a future meeting.
 - What are the flood control benefits of removing levees and allowing rivers to take their natural course? Setting levees back from the river and designing them with gentler grades that incorporate foliage can have a significant flood protection and environmental benefits. A member urged King County to take into account the impacts of sediment deposits that result from returning a river to its more natural course.
 - One of the programs incorporated into the Flood Control Zone District projects is to buy out properties in flood-prone areas; staff noted that in some areas of the County it is either physically impossible or economically prohibitive to provide flood protection of certain properties. The question was raised: What if people are reluctant to sell? Owners of these properties will be offered a fair market value for their homes. King County has a history of working with willing landowners. King County has not had to condemn properties for flood protection
 - The suggestion was made that affordable housing and relocation costs be taken into account when dealing with property buy-outs. King County does account for these costs and Ron Sims suggested that the WLRD involve the King County Housing Authority and the Seattle Housing Authority in these decisions.
 - The issue of federal regulation over flood insurance was raised. Over the next few years, the federal government is expected to stop subsidizing flood insurance for repetitive loss owners who have been offered, but have refused, the option of a property buy-out or other mitigation. This will provide an increased incentive for property owners to sell.

- Q: Is King County confident in the modeling programs it uses to anticipate flood reduction benefit from our projects that allow for more room for the river to flow?

A: Yes.

- Committee discussion ensued around the issue of “regional” flood control projects vs. “local” flood control projects. Two members said they were concerned because their cities have already spent a considerable amount of money dealing with flood issues on a local level. Asking them to spend more money to deal with flooding issues in other areas of King County seems unfair. Further, they noted that properties closest to flood abatement projects will receive a greater economic benefit. What is the defining line between a regional benefit and a local benefit?
- Most other members of the Committee responded that the projects and plans outlined in the flood plan are all regional in nature. Even if flood events do not occur in a certain area, the economic impacts are felt region-wide.
- Is there a way to determine the historical costs of certain cities building next to the river? The historical investments cities have in flood control? Members said: Over the past century *all* areas of King County have incurred costs due to losses from floods. Due to climate change the severity of flooding is increasing. It is difficult to try to retrace these costs, the rationale for building so close to a river, and other historical aspects of flood control.
- One member commented in closing: “We are *all* connected.”

Next Meeting and Next Steps

- The next meeting will take place Friday, June 8th from 9 a.m to noon at Renton City Hall. During this meeting the committee will begin their review of the projects that are proposed for the first six-year Capital Improvement Plan.