



TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

Town Hall
405 Martin Luther King Jr.
Boulevard
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Booker Creek Working Group Meeting Notes

Chair John Morris
Chair Pamela Schultz
Vice-Chair Jeanette Bench
Doug Frederick
Antonia Sebastian (absent)
Shugong Wang (left early)

Noel Myers (absent)
Chad Pickens
Miguel Rojas Sotelo (absent)
Michael Dupree
Louie Rivers (absent)

Monday, April 25, 2022

6pm

Virtual Meeting

1 Roll Call and Announcements

Introduced the agenda and speakers for the evening.

2 Report of Cary Stormwater Initiatives presented by Billy Lee, Stormwater Operations Manager, and Lisa Booze, Floodplain Administrator

Billy Lee presented on the development and application of the Town of Cary's adaptive stormwater process. This process was initiated at the end of 2017 at the direction of the Town of Cary's Town Council. The study was undertaken with these three key initiatives: citizen engagement, a review of policy, and a pilot watershed. Several working groups were established including a citizen group, steering committee and several topic specific groups including maintenance, open space, finance, basin model and ordinance. Each group was given a list of considerations to review from which action items emerged. For example, the ordinance group action items were to add the mitigation of peak flows for the 100-year storm and investigate joining the community rating system.

Another ongoing project was the basin model pilot focused on Walnut Creek which is the smallest basin. A contractor built a dynamic model in [EPA Storm Water Management Model \(SWMM\)](#) to simulate rain events for assessing which properties would flood and evaluate scenarios. The scenarios included infrastructure upgrades, channel improvements, green infrastructure, underground detention, and open space. A maintenance plan was also determined for infrastructure assets.

From these focus groups and Council input, the Town's adaptive stormwater program emerged with the following three objectives: open space restoration, flood mitigation, and reduction in loss. The next steps identified were to refine policies and programs

for developed areas, develop open space acquisition criteria, pursue infrastructure improvement opportunities, and advance the community conversation.

Lisa Booze presented on Town of Cary's path to [FEMA's community rating system \(CRS\)](#). The desire for this program emerged from the number of properties and commercial building in the mapped floodplain because over 50% of Cary was developed prior to the floodplain ordinance. Once accepted into the program, the flood insurance discount would be available to everyone in Cary regardless of their property location with respect to the floodplain. Lisa reviewed the activities that receive credit for the CRS program: public information, warning and response, mapping and regulation, and flood damage reduction. The Town conducted an internal evaluation of their program to determine if it would meet the threshold to join the program. They made some modifications such as a new database and improving record retention. Subsequently, the Council adopted a resolution to proceed with the CRS program. The next step is for an internal audit by FEMA CRS program.

4 Discussion on Town of Cary Stormwater Program

The following notes are intended as a summary of the topics during the discussion between the working group members and presenter.

- Cary staff reviewed the relationship between CRS program accreditation and insurance reduction. Town of Cary is aiming for a classification that would confer a 10% insurance reduction.
- Cary has acquired 9 houses through the buyout program and converted those lots to open space. The stormwater department receives approximately \$500,000/year from the general revenue fund for this program initiative.
- Cary is assisting developers in meeting the 100-year peak flow mitigation requirements by providing funding. The developers need to use the Town's stormwater model. Cary has directed approximately \$500,000/year to this program initiative.
- With respect to a preferred strategy, Cary is taking a site-specific approach which could be buyouts, infrastructure improvements, grading, or adding detention.
- Cary is prioritizing expanding the basin modeling in areas developed prior to floodplain ordinances.
- Cary utilized a \$5,000 grant to fund rain gardens and other types of green infrastructure for residents. They are looking at expanding that in areas with no stormwater management as a non-regulatory approach. These types of green infrastructure projects are not included into the model. New development is open to green infrastructure along streets when possible, for which the town reimburses them.
- Cary has not pursued stream restoration. Last year, they created an urban forester position who has a charge to manage invasive plant species.
- The model has been used to assess the removal of impervious areas and look for opportunities.
- Cary has deployed many sensors and rain gauges to calibrate model. The plan is to expand sensor deployment as the model work continues.

- The stormwater department in Cary reports to the town manager's office.

4 Recommendation on Protection of Bottomland Forests by Doug Frederick

The presentation provided context for why the bottomland forest are beneficial. The key objectives of this recommendation include

- an increase in the permanent protection of town-owned properties and an effort to acquire new properties
- easement and/or permanent conservation of key properties
- more careful land use planning
- development of a natural land inventory

The discussion of this recommendation included these topics

- Need for maintenance of invasive and exotic species
- Federal and state funding
- Town staff related what information currently exists with respect to Town-owned properties, state datasets, and conservation easement partners (i.e. NC Botanical Gardens and Triangle Land Conservancy).

The 5 working group members all gave a rating of 5 equal to a strong endorsement to this recommendation.

5 Looking ahead to Completion of Our Assignment

The next session will be on environmental justice. A request was made to fellow working group members to help draft the recommendations and to Town staff to assist with compiling these recommendations. A suggestion was made to have the report respond to the mayor's charge and to be explicit that the recommendation will not eliminate flooding. It was suggested that the report describe the focus on mitigation focused and the benefits from these recommendations. The chairs will present an update to the Town Council work session on May 11.

6 Public Input

A suggestion was made to include an introduction to the report that provides context on impervious surface in the town over town and in future build out conditions. A public member noted that the idea of a natural land inventory is not a new idea and has been discussed previously and currently by council members as a need. A third public member requested that third parties not the Town hold the conservation easement and called for maintenance plans for invasives.

7 Adjourn